PAUL: THE JEW

By the Author of - By An Unknown Disciple

Paul (Saint)

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By the Author of
"By An Unknown Disciple"

Mrs. John S. Phillimore

A man's religion is his relationship with the unseen.
His creed is his explanation of that experience.
—*From a dream.*

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I

It was in Jerusalem that Paul had first heard of Jesus of Nazareth. Sometimes in later years, becalmed at sea listening to the flop-flap of feeble waves against the hull of a motionless ship, or at night when the caravan had halted and he lay by the camp fire too tired to sleep, he would try to remember what he had then heard, and he was always astonished to find how little he could recollect. He could recall vividly his thoughts of his father, and the very words of some of his discussions with Gamaliel were clear, but what had been said of Jesus had left so faint an impression that beyond the name " Jesus of Nazareth " and a few stray sentences he had forgotten everything.

It had been in the year when he had gone up alone to the Temple to sacrifice. He had stayed with Gamaliel, his father's old friend. His father was rich and could easily afford the journey to Jerusalem, but business too often kept him in Tarsus. Paul remembered how he had hoped that year

that he would leave business, however profitable, to make the annual sacrifice on which, it might be, their salvation depended; but though he was then nearly thirty years old and becoming a person of importance himself, he was still timid before his father, and had not dared to question the decision of the old man.

Gamaliel was old, too. He had been born a few years before Paul's father. He had lived to a great age. Paul could recall every detail of his tall, thin figure, with lines of sharp shoulder-blades showing beneath his old cloak, and the kind, brown eyes that looked so straight at you from under the clean, white headgear. Gamaliel had an aloof, tender wisdom and a mild tolerance which made it easy to say things to him that Paul would never have tried to express to his father. But then, if any man could be sure, Gamaliel was sure of eternal life. He had lived all his life in Jerusalem, within a stone's throw of the Temple, able to sacrifice at such times as the Law enjoined, while Paul's father had been born in exile. He could only come up to Jerusalem by risking great losses in his business, and, torn in two between his worldly advantage and his eternal salvation, the hard, resentful look in his eyes had frightened Paul since

his childhood. Every memory of his father withered and pinched the soul, while the very thought of Gamaliel was one to warm the heart. But what had been said of Jesus? It had been said by Gamaliel, that was certain, and it had somehow grown out of the talk they had had as they walked home together through the Temple courts. Paul remembered how, as they struck into the great centre way of Herod's cloisters, Gamaliel had said that the long row of pillars stretching before them were like the trees in a pine forest. He had wished that the fourth row had not been so deeply interwoven into the wall, for it spoilt the illusion of the forest. Paul himself always admired the heavy carvings in wood in the roof, and the Corinthian sculptures at the tops of the pillars. Herod must have copied those from some he had seen in Greece, perhaps in Corinth itself. How wicked Herod had been, but with what a knowledge of men and of the world! He had pulled the Jews into the very heart of the Empire. And cunning too. Who but Herod would have dared to tell the victorious Octavius to his face that a man had a right to fight for his friends, and that he wished he had done more for Antony? Was it his outspokenness or his bribe that had made

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Cæsar his friend? If Antony had taken Herod's advice and slain Cleopatra he could have conquered Octavius. But the Romans were all like that. Their pleasures destroyed them.

Was it then that they had spoken of Jesus? Searching his mind, Paul could only find a vague memory of something crude and out of harmony, as if a contemptuous comment had been made. But by whom? Gamaliel had never spoken with contempt of any human being. He had been too wise and too kind. And yet that faint impression remained. They had discussed the new theories of the Jews in Alexandria, but that would not lead to the mention of Jesus, who cared nothing for philosophy. Paul had met Gamaliel on equal ground there, for he had known as much of the Alexandrians as the old man had done. But they hadn't talked of Alexandria until they had reached the house again. The other talk as they left the Inner Court of the Temple after the service had surely been of sacrifice? Of course. It all flooded back into Paul's mind. It had begun with the hot, savage smell of blood. In spite of the efforts of the priests to keep everything reasonably clean, and in spite of the half-yearly whitening of the unhewn

stones, that horrible smell of mingled blood and burnt fat hung everywhere near the Altar of Sacrifice. Even when you avoided the benches near the east fire on which the offerings were burnt, a wind from the hills might blow the smell right round the colonnade. Paul could see it all: the great smouldering fire with bits of half-burnt flesh and bones and ashes all tidily raked together; the lamb tightly held with its legs bunched together like a water-bag; the fingers of the sacrificing priest searching for its windpipe, and the bend forward of the attendant priest with the pointed silver vessel into which the blood would spurt from the cut throat of the victim. Then the sprinkling of the blood, the marble tables piled with flesh and fat and cleaned entrails, the great heap of salt, the splashes of blood on the white garments of the priests and their bare feet . . . blood-speckled too . . . as they walked up and down the salt-strewn causeway to the altar. All his life worship in the Temple had been associated with that smell, and with the bleating of sheep and the cries of the kids tied to the gold rings ready for sacrifice. But that was only the external. Thank God, there was the spiritual side too: the sound of the silver trumpets whose three blasts symbolised

the Kingdom of God, and His divine providence, and His last judgment; the singing of the Levites; the silence while the people prayed; and the splendour of the scarlet and blue and purple curtain when the great doors of the Holy Place were flung open and the thin clouds of smoke drifted out from the Altar of Incense, at dawn and at sunset, to remind men of the supremacy of the spiritual body and of the duty of thanksgiving to God for all His gifts. And God Himself ever present in the Most Holy Place beyond.

But how, on the day when he had worshipped with Gamaliel, had the talk of sacrifice begun? Paul remembered when he traced it all back that, as he had watched the smoke from the burning of the offerings curl up against the blue sky beyond the white marble walls, he had longed to be able to sacrifice for his father also. Must a sinner always offer the sacrifice himself? God accepted the blood of animals as offerings of repentance instead of the life of the sinner forfeited to Him. Could no one, not even a son, take the sinner's place before God?

They had walked home across the Women's Court and through the Beautiful Gate. As they left the Inner Court

Gamaliel had turned back for a moment to pick out the Greek inscription (his Greek was limited):

"LET NO FOREIGNER ENTER WITHIN THIS BALUSTRADE
OR THE ENCLOSING WALL WHICH SURROUNDS THE SANCTUARY.
IF SUCH A ONE IS CAUGHT
ON HIS OWN HEAD WILL BE THE BLAME FOR HIS CONSEQUENT DEATH."

With a sigh Gamaliel had said that he wished the Temple authorities were more generous to god-fearing Pagans, and not waiting for a reply he had gone on. But the inscription had made Paul think of the exiles in Tarsus and of the Gentiles who Sabbath after Sabbath came to the synagogue there, and as he followed Gamaliel to the left . . . how careful the old man had always been to observe all the rules . . . for the long walk round the Cloisters, he said:

"The Greeks can offer sacrifice in any of their Temples, but we only sacrifice in Jerusalem. Every Jew cannot get to Jerusalem."

"The Greeks have dozens of gods. They carry them with them wherever they

go," Gamaliel had replied, "but our one Temple is a symbol of our one and only God. As God is one, His Temple also is one."

"Yes," said Paul. "But thousands of the Jews who are scattered over the Empire can never hope to see Jerusalem. If only a Jew who is in Jerusalem could offer sacrifice for one at a distance . . ."

He broke off, and Gamaliel turned his mild eyes on him.

"'None of them can by any reason redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him,'" he quoted.

"Yes," said Paul. "But isn't that meant for people who trust to their wealth for salvation? The Law also says that God visits the sins of the fathers on the children. That is a hard rule, and the children accept it because they must. But in return might not God allow the virtues of the children to count as merit for the fathers?"

Gamaliel shook his head.

"God must have thought that Law too hard, for He modified it afterwards when He said, 'The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son.'"

"Not even if the son is willing?" Paul asked.

" It would mean that one man could take upon himself the sins of another," said Gamaliel.

" The Law allows the sin to be put upon animals," Paul said quickly.

" It is another symbol," said Gamaliel. " Man's acknowledgment of wrongdoing and God's acceptance of his repentance. The real sacrifice is in the heart."

" But if men can sacrifice in their hearts there is no need for the Temple or our sacrifices there," Paul objected.

Gamaliel smiled.

" That is what some people are saying now," he said.

" Not Jews? " said Paul.

" Yes, Jews. That is, I think the man is a Jew," Gamaliel replied; and Paul remembered how, forgetting his father, he had declared indignantly :

" But the Temple and our sacrifices are the centre of the Law. If they are useless, then there is no escape from death, and the Law has led us wrong."

" The holy Law cannot lead us wrong," said Gamaliel. " The fault would be in ourselves. I have not paid much attention to this teaching, but I gather it is not against the Law, but only to remind us that there is something higher than the Law, and

that we can worship God in Temples not made with hands."

"Why did God command us to build a Temple, then, and sacrifice in it?" Paul had persisted.

Gamaliel shook his head.

"It is one of our traditions. But men question everything nowadays, even teaching which in my youth we took for granted. Jerusalem is always full of debaters. They seem to think that to debate is a virtue."

"The Sadducees always did," said Paul. "They say they accept all the written Law, but they question every tradition in which we believe. They are never sure of anything."

Gamaliel sighed.

"We Jews are never done with our disputes and differences," he said.

"The Greeks are worse," said Paul. "And we must reason about the things that matter."

Gamaliel smiled.

"Whether it is better for man to have been created or not to have been created?" he asked. "We debate that in Jerusalem. Does that matter?"

"It would be wiser to spend time trying to gain eternal life instead of debating if God did well to create us. Who are we to

question God?" Paul cried, and he could almost see again Gamaliel's quick glance at him and hear the change of tone in which he had answered.

"Ah, well. It is the property of God to be creating, as the Alexandrians say, and seeing we have been created, no doubt it is waste of time debating about it."

What had been in the mind of the old man? He had spoken lightly. But with all his piety Gamaliel had the gift of taking life easily. If you talked to him of the Law for hours you might never discover that eternal life was at stake. He did not believe, like the Sadducees, that our souls die with our bodies, but he had never seemed to feel the anxiety about the end which devoured other men. Since he had been a member of the Great Council he had taken great interest in tithes and in his work on the Calendar.

They had stopped for a moment when they reached the Court of the Gentiles to look down at the crowd. The money-changers had been busy at their tables, and foreigners in many-coloured clothes were wandering about, gazing at the oxen and sheep and the great wicker baskets full of fluttering doves. As usual, the noise had been deafening.

"It is like a fair," said Gamaliel; "I do not like it." And he had gone on to say there was a tendency growing even amongst Jews, to take short cuts backwards and forwards through the courts of the Temple but that he never did it.

"No doubt I am old-fashioned, but I like the old ways best. It is only a custom, of course," he had said, as he walked on again. But then he had given Paul a great surprise, for he had turned to him suddenly and added:

"Many people are going further, and asking, like you, whether the Law is not too arduous."

"I?" Paul had exclaimed. "I never question the Law. Why, I fulfil every particle of it!"

"Yes?" Gamaliel had looked at him puzzled. "But when you spoke of sacrifice? I felt that you were thinking that the Law pressed too heavily on the Exiles. You may not have said it, but surely. . . . Perhaps you were thinking of your converts? Or I may have mixed up what you were saying with difficulties which other missionaries have told me of."

"There are difficulties," Paul had acknowledged. "I question parts of the ceremonial Law, but I never relax the

claim of the moral Law. What other hope have we? Why, even ignorant Greeks, who hate our ritual, respect that, and many of the educated ones have told me that they see that God has given us a special revelation in it."

At that moment they had struck into the Royal Porch, and Gamaliel had asked no more, but had spoken of the pine forest. Had he seen something in Paul's mind of which he was not conscious himself? If he had, he had not mentioned it again but when they were nearly at the end of the Cloister he had said :

" You must know a great deal about the Gentiles. I hear from all sides that your work is very successful."

" In a way it is," Paul replied. " A number of Greeks in Tarsus attend the synagogue, and in a sense they belong to us. But it is hard for a Gentile to become a real Jew."

" The ceremonial Law again? But surely their acceptance of the one and only God is the chief thing? " said Gamaliel.

" It is not enough to overthrow their idols. Look at the lives they lead! If they are to be saved they must accept the discipline of the Law," Paul said.

" Are they worse than other men? " Gamaliel asked.

" Worse ? " Paul had cried. " Their vice is shameless. How can men hope for eternal life when they so vilely abuse the life they have ? It makes me despair of any man's salvation."

" But that is to despair of God's love," said Gamaliel.

" There is God's anger, too," Paul had replied, and again Gamaliel had looked at him in that odd way, but he had not spoken, for they were leaving the Temple, and the steps down and then up the steep ravine made the old man breathless. Afterwards, walking one after the other on the narrow path raised for the purified above the defilements of the street, there was no chance for conversation. But when they came to the house Paul remembered how Gamaliel had paused at the door of his courtyard and looked back up the narrow street where the sun shone on one side of the marble walls, to the white and gold beauty of the Temple, and the Towers, standing out against the hills beyond.

" See how beautiful it all is," he had said. " And it was made by man. Do you think that God has not skill greater than any of His creatures ? Nothing can justify us before Him, but is He not our Father, and are we not the work of His hands ? "

If Paul shut his eyes he could reproduce the whole picture. The very stones in the street, worn smooth by men's footsteps, and the sound of Gamaliel's kind old voice became real again.

But he remembered how harshly he had answered :

" It is only the recluse who believes in the goodness of man. You live apart from the world. If you realised men's beastliness you would know that their need of salvation is desperate."

And Gamaliel had replied :

" If I am ignorant, God knows. And He has told me that He will forgive."

Paul could still hear the hard tones of his own voice as he answered :

" God has also said ' The soul that sins shall die.' "

Had Gamaliel thought him hard? It was not hardness. It was fear. How could he not fear, seeing that the most of men, in spite of all efforts to warn them, lived heedless of death, abandoning themselves to devils? What hope of freedom was there when even those whom you loved might be bound after death to a land desolate of joy, there, if God willed, to be shut up in prison for ever or allowed to exist possessing only the faint shadow of their

old energy and vividness? God had not then given men the revelation which had brought certainty and hope.

They had walked slowly across the court-yard to the house door. And Gamaliel had spoken of the influence which the Jews were gaining over all the world, and Paul had said that it might mean that God had decreed the conversion of the Empire to Judaism.

"It may be so if we are worthy of it," Gamaliel had replied. "It is a great honour to be allowed to proclaim the one and only spiritual God and His holy Law, but I fear," and he shook his head, "I fear that some of us forget the message and use our influence to get wealth. If we do that we shall find that the Romans and Cæsar will be our enemies."

And then Paul had suddenly remembered his father.

"We cannot help getting wealth," he had said. "We work so much harder than the Gentiles. In a foreign country there is more time to work. There is no Temple and no sacrifice. We tend to forget God and get absorbed in money-making, and we lose heart too. You don't know how it galls to feel that because you have left your own country you must take an inferior rank

before God. Neither our converts nor we stand before God as you do. And yet it is not our fault. Some of us were forced into exile."

Gamaliel with his hand on the house-door had turned.

"Don't you think we can safely trust that also to God's mercy and justice?"

"You mean that God will not insist on His own Law being carried out?" Paul demanded.

"I do not know," Gamaliel had answered. "If we carried it out in every particular we are still unworthy and must trust to His love. And if a man cannot come to Jerusalem to sacrifice because of duty . . . well, if he loves his fellow creatures . . ."

"But our first duty is to God," Paul had interrupted.

"God knows our motives and will judge accordingly," Gamaliel had replied, and Paul's heart sank. What if men would not face their motives? What if they put love of money before love of God? Had his father really found it impossible to come to Jerusalem? Would God weigh his generosity to the missions and to Paul himself against his disobedience to plain commands? Paul broke off suddenly and said bitterly:

" Life is full of perplexities. You are lucky to be able to live in Jerusalem."

" It is my fate. And I have faith that God will find a way of salvation for all," said Gamaliel. He had pushed open the house-door, and then he had paused, and, looking at Paul with a smile in his eyes, he had added :

" And you know, Paul, you would hate to live in Jerusalem. You would find us narrow and provincial."

" What ? If it meant salvation ? " Paul had begun, but Gamaliel had gone on into the house and had not answered.

How the mind wandered, adding thought to thought ! It must have been on that same day, but towards evening, that Gamaliel had spoken of Jesus. There was a gap in Paul's memory here which he was never able to bridge. He remembered how they had sat in the courtyard and talked of the spread of Judaism, and he could recall that Philo had been mentioned, but between Philo and the mention of Jesus there was a blank. He had been telling Gamaliel of the Greeks, of their love of philosophy, and of how they made a religion of it (as if salvation was to be found in philosophy), and Gamaliel had suddenly said :

"Alexander, the Governor of the Jews in Alexandria, has a brother who is a skilful philosopher. Have you heard of him?"

Of Philo? Yes, Paul had heard of his influence in the colony there, and some of his writings had been brought to Tarsus just before he had left for Jerusalem.

"I have read one or two," Gamaliel had said. "He is a young man . . . that is, young compared with me, but perhaps about your age or a little older. I know nothing of philosophy. The Law has been enough for me, but from what I read and have heard other men say Philo is as clever as any Greek."

"He goes further than any of our teachers in his commentaries on the Scripture," Paul had replied. "He makes the Law an allegory. Even Abraham and our fathers, he thinks, are types showing some allegorical truth. Of course, he is writing for Greeks. Every Greek thinks as he pleases, and they cannot understand why the promises were made to Abraham and not to a Greek, nor why the Law was given to Moses to save Jews only. Pagans are left out. They see no reason for it."

"Do you think that Philo's philosophic view will make the Greeks more ready to accept the Law?" Gamaliel had asked.

" Not in the least," Paul had replied. " I think it is the wrong way. The Law cannot be whittled away. The one God has spoken, and He must say the same truth to all men. The Gentiles must accept the revelation as it stands. I try to convince them that we have been given a special revelation by showing that our religion is one of the spirit and that we worship a spiritual God. Why, the gods of the Greeks are wickeder than men. Even God-fearing pagans who sacrifice to God Himself, sacrifice as well to all sorts of demons, spirits of the woods and of the fields. If you make a Gentile see that the one God is the only Being to whom sacrifice must be offered, it is a beginning. But sometimes I doubt if they will ever see the truth. There cannot be two truths, one for the Gentiles and one for us, and they are too proud to accept ours."

It was at this point that Paul's memory began to fail. He remembered that Gamaliel had said that perhaps Philo would succeed in making a link between Jew and Gentile, and that then he had spoken of Messiah.

" It may be that Philo makes Messiah an allegory too," he had said. " But I am old-fashioned, and though these clever

people may say he is a type, no true Jew can ever cease to hope for his coming."

"Gentiles take no interest in Messiah," Paul had replied. "It is a purely Jewish hope. They might think of him as our King, but they would not allow that he could reign over the Empire . . . even if it were ready for him."

"Or when he comes to make it ready?" Gamaliel had said.

"They could understand that. They bring all their gods to earth," Paul had answered.

"And our religion teaches men slowly and painfully to ascend to God instead of dragging Him down to them." Gamaliel reflected in his gentle voice. He had gone on to speak of the beauty of the Law, and how by its means men learn, through the life of the body, to live the life of the spirit.

"This must be what Philo means when he talks of the two men in each of us, and of how we must discipline the earthly man until he becomes the heavenly man," Gamaliel had said. "Even what he says of the Temple may be meant to guide men's minds to this truth."

"Yes, but it is teaching that makes men lax," Paul had replied, and he remembered

that he had quoted Philo's actual words to Gamaliel. "The universal world is the highest and truest Temple of God, and the soul of the grateful man is the altar on which the inner flame, the sacred fire, must be kept burning in each of us."

"They are fine words," he had said, "but if Philo teaches that to the Greeks they will say that the Temple and our sacrifices are useless. God has either given us the Law, or He has not. If He gave it, then we must obey. What better is such teaching, even in the words of Philo, than that of the outcast Jews of which you spoke this morning?"

"But they are not outcasts." Gamaliel had said, "They worship devoutly in the Temple. The man Jesus, of whom I spoke to you, has probably never heard of Philo. He is not an educated man, and his followers are simple people, but he is not an outcast."

"Jesus?" Paul remembered he had said. "I did not hear you speak of him. Who is he?"

"He is the man who teaches that God must be worshipped first in the soul of man, and could be so worshipped if the Temple were destroyed. I may not have mentioned his name."

"And he is allowed to preach this in Jerusalem? It is dangerous doctrine," Paul had said.

"It would be dangerous to stop it. The people think he is a prophet. He comes from Nazareth, a small, mean village in Galilee. Have you ever heard of it?"

"Never," said Paul.

"People say it is a place unlikely to produce a prophet," Gamaliel had replied. "But the man himself is a good man and has great powers of healing. His influence is spreading everywhere, and indeed he preaches nothing that is not in our own scriptures. If we were truly a nation of priests we should need no Temple, and the Kingdom of God could be here and now if men only cared to bring it to pass. But we are far from that holiness."

"That is why it is dangerous to allow such preaching," Paul had declared passionately. "It may lead to a breakdown in the Law, and the loss of endless souls. The spread of Gentile looseness has always been our danger, and if the power of the Law is weakened what hope have we? We are no better off than pagans. It is wicked to encourage ignorant teachers who do not see the consequences of what they are teaching."

Gamaliel had not agreed. Paul remembered his reply :

" It is true, as Philo says, that light-minded men are like empty vessels, easily taken and moved by the ears, but if a teaching comes from God what effort of ours can stop it? If it is not from God it will wither and fade away. Spiritual truth cannot die. And the man is a good man."

Was that all that Gamaliel had said? Paul might strain his mind, but he could recall no more.

And the contempt? Had that been in his own proud mind? Was it he who had made the scornful comparison between an unlettered Jew from a small, mean village and the learned philosopher of Alexandria whose writings were beginning to interest the world? Truly God knew how to confound the arrogance of the intellect.

II

Paul left Jerusalem in the early morning. He was in haste, for he had heard that one of the coastwise ships that traded to Sidon was going on to Seleucia, the port of Antioch in Syria, and he hoped to catch it. Gamaliel had lent him his mules, so that he would travel in comfort as far as Joppa. From Joppa to Seleucia, if the winds were fair, was a quick passage, and from Antioch he would travel by land, through the Syrian Gates to Tarsus.

It had rained heavily the night before. The water, rushing in rivers from the highest courtyards to the lowest stone steps of the staircase streets, had washed Jerusalem clean and fresh. The flinty hooves of the mules made a sharp, pleasant patter as they scrambled from step to step up the Street of the Small Markets, and Paul's spirits rose at the sound. The sun was rising, and flocks of tame pigeons were flying in circles round Herod's dovecotes. The shadow of Herod's white marble

Towers lay across his gardens, and the Towers themselves looked as if they had been cut out of the solid rock. Paul glanced up at them as he passed. The stones were so finely pointed that the joints could not be seen. The Towers would last for ever. So would the wall that enclosed the city. Its mortar was imperishable.

Outside the Joppa Gate the rain had washed the rocks and boulders on the tableland as clean as the streets of the city. The bald, curved slopes of the hills stretched around, stern and desolate. Paul pulled up his mule and turned in his saddle for a last look at Jerusalem. Beyond the wall, beyond the Towers of Herod, the Tower of Antonia and the white and gold Temple rose into the air. At noon the plates of gold that covered the Temple roof would reflect the rays of the sun with such blazing splendour that men would shade their eyes, but now the Temple and its pinnacles stood out palely against the dawn, with the beauty of something seen in a dream. It was like the vision of a city built by God, Paul thought, as he turned away on the road to Joppa. And yet it had been built by Herod.

Here and there by the roadside a creeping plant had burst into pale green, or the leaves of an aged olive in a hollow drenched by the rain had renewed their youth, but Paul did not notice. His mind had turned inward, and he was thinking of Herod. God had given Herod a soul, but with it He had given him the power to choose virtue or vice, and Herod had chosen vice. The great works which he had built would last for ever, but Herod himself was dead. Unconsciously Paul drove his heels into the sides of his mule. The animal quickened its steps and laid one ear back to listen, then after a few moments, judging that its rider had forgotten, it fell into its usual pace again.

Had Herod, who was the work of God's hands, perished utterly, or was he now a worn-out shade, without strength or power, who could never again act as he pleased, or live with the old vigour that he had had in the life of the body? The Essenes said that all souls are immortal, but that only the soul of the good man goes from one body to another. Was it likely that God would give Herod breath and life again when he had lived for himself and not for righteousness?

The mule stopped to snatch a mouthful

of thistle, and Paul came back into the present with a start. Gamaliel's servants, following one of the other tracks of the zigzag road, had lagged behind, too polite to hasten when the master lingered. Paul pulled the mule's head out of the thistle and called to the head man to ride forward and consult about the journey. He must put Herod and the fate of mankind out of his head. It was his business now to get to Joppa.

It was thirty-two miles from Jerusalem to the sea, the man said. But that would be direct as the stork flies. It was longer by road. He had not often gone so far. Gamaliel seldom went beyond the College at Lydda. Yes, he knew the road to Lydda perfectly, and no doubt, if all went well, they might reach Joppa the next evening. The Master used his mules so little that they were never in hard condition, but at three miles an hour, leaving plenty of time for the mid-day rest, they could just do it. The mules were fresh now, though they had already made one journey that morning from their stable outside Jerusalem to the house of Gamaliel, who was too strict a Jew to allow them to sleep inside the city. But they could stay a few days at Joppa to allow them to

recover before the return journey. If they did not get to Joppa the next evening they would certainly arrive the day after.

Paul saw that the man had no mind to hurry, but he would have none of his laziness.

"I must be at Joppa to-morrow evening," he said decisively. "The ship may sail the day after. Three miles an hour? Why, I could walk faster! Your master told me not to spare men or mules."

To this the man replied that if it could be done it would be done.

"I had planned to stay some time at Emmaus, where I have a brother. We started so early this morning. We might go further and sleep at mid-day below the Roman camp, at Colonia. Robbers would be afraid to attack us there. If we lose no time we may get to Modin before dark."

"We must," Paul said. "But we will stay at Emmaus for a short rest, and you can see your brother and tell him you will be back again in a day or two."

"My brother has an arbour, where you can rest sheltered from the sun," the man said. He called to the other two men who were with him to hurry up, and they went on steadily, avoiding where they could the stones and broken earth on the road. The

rain had washed the dust from the rocks, but it had softened the road surface, and as the sun rose higher and higher the mud, dried back into powder, covered them from head to foot. There were other groups of travellers on the road now who seemed to have sprung from nowhere, and with each new set of feet the dust became more stifling. They caught up to the group in front, who greeted them in Greek, and who appeared to be merchants, as they were travelling with a large train of camels. Paul had not much chance to see more, for the foremost camels ploughed suddenly into a rut deeper than usual, and he lost sight of the whole group in a cloud of dust.

Paul's muleteers, who were riding close behind him, were growing uneasy. They muffled their heads closer in their turban veils and pulled their cloaks more tightly round their shoulders, and the head man kept looking anxiously round the horizon. At last Paul asked him what was the matter.

"I am watching for a wind," the man said, and Paul, astonished, asked:

"What do you want a wind for? It will make the dust worse."

"I do not want one. I am afraid there will be one. It is dangerous to ride through dust."

" Uncomfortable, not dangerous," Paul corrected.

" If you tread on an evil spirit it raises a whirlwind. They live in the dust," the man said nervously.

" What if they do ? Is there any corner of the world without its demon ?" Paul replied.

The muleteer rode a pace nearer, and said in a low voice :

" But if a man dies in a wind-storm his soul is whirled away by the wind-spirits. We must be ready to fall on our faces at the first sign of wind."

" Nonsense," Paul said angrily. " I will fall on my face before no wind-spirit."

" It is the only way to escape," the man said.

" Surely your soul will perish with your body if you fall down before any spirit but God," Paul said sternly.

Before the muleteer had time to reply one of the Greek merchants who was mounted on a tall mule loomed out of the mist close beside them. The cloud of dust was now settling, and the buff shapes of the uncouth camels could be dimly seen plodding ahead. The Greek was a large fat man. He wore a broad-brimmed Greek felt hat tied under his chin with a string, and he had a loud, comfortable voice.

"I am the last man in the world to annoy any spirit," he said; "but surely the best way to avoid hurting them would be to mend your roads? Any spirit would lie less softly on a paved way, and perhaps even Jewish spirits would betake themselves to easier beds."

The muleteer spoke little Greek, but he was quick to catch the note of mockery in the voice of the merchant, and answered hastily:

"Our roads are good enough for us." Then as the dust cleared and he saw that he spoke to a man of some importance, he pulled back his mule to give place to the better-mounted foreigner, and fell behind, muttering to his fellow servants:

"The demons that the Gentiles bring with them are fifty times worse than any of ours. And everybody knows what happens if you tread on an evil spirit or sit down on one on a rubbish heap."

As they all rode forward the Greek asked Paul politely if he objected to his company.

"I gathered from your exhortation to your servant that you are a Jew, and, like most of your countrymen, you may prefer to travel alone."

The note of raillery was still in his voice,

but Paul ignored it, and answered with courtesy :

" I am a Jew, it is true, but I do not live in Judea, and I am also a Roman Citizen."

" Indeed ? " The Greek's mockery dropped from him. " And from which province do you come ? I hear from your accent that you are not from Greece."

" I am a native of Tarsus," said Paul.

" Tarsus ? I have never been there, though I have sometimes made a deal in Cilician groats."

" You are a corn-merchant, then ? " Paul asked.

" Corn, yes, and many other things. I travel to and fro between Syria and Corinth, where I belong. My companions are merchants too, and we trade in company. I used to travel in Egypt, but I had to give that up when Augustus took to the grain trade. You see from our bales we have been to the wool market in Jerusalem. It is a great market, and I must say that you Jews are good men of business. You are our only serious competitors. The ambition of every Roman is to become a Knight, not to be a good merchant, and the Egyptians are too narrow and mean to do large trading."

Paul, thinking that the man was more interested in expressing what was in his own mind than in finding out what was in the minds of others, did not interrupt, but listened politely while the Greek ran on, talking first of one thing and then of another.

"The Romans are taking over this country in good earnest," he said. "No doubt you agree with me that they are not thinkers, but they give us good roads. But I forget. You are a Citizen of the Empire, and indeed I am one myself. But even so we may agree that they are an uncultivated people. They will bring you water to Jerusalem. Curious, is it not, that there are no springs there when there are so many on this road to Joppa? Between ourselves, Pilate is a bad lot, but he has his ideas. He will make you pay for his aqueduct, but you will get the water. Gossip in Jerusalem says that he means to take the treasure from the Temple for it! I hope your people won't rebel again over that. These constant rebellions close the roads and spoil trade."

Paul said that he had seen no signs of rebellion amongst his friends in Jerusalem, but that the rebellions in Syria generally swept up suddenly from Galilee, and the

Jews in the capital often did not know of them. The Greek's mind suddenly veered into curiosity.

"You have many friends in Jerusalem? Yes? You are not a merchant, are you? You do not look like one, and you travel light without bales. But your mules are good."

"I am neither merchant nor soldier," said Paul. "I am a scribe."

"Scribe? What is that?" asked the Greek.

Paul explained that he might be called a lawyer if the Greek pleased, but that as his concern was with the Law of God only, they might not mean the same thing.

"You pay no attention to the Law of man, then?" asked the Greek.

"Only to bring it into accord with the Law of God," Paul replied.

"If you can do that you are indeed a good man and will not be neglected by the gods," cried the Greek. "Though my difficulty is to understand the Laws of your gods. Take this case about oil at Antioch now. The Jews there are tying up all the trade of the country because they will not use oil prepared by foreigners. They say that their god has forbidden

them. But how can that be? The gods do not make distinctions like that. I do not say that they may not have their favourites, but to prevent trade between nations! It is impossible."

"But the God of the Jews is the only God, and He did give His people Laws," Paul said. "That one was to prevent our people from being corrupted by the false gods worshipped by the tribes round them. This land was full of small gods, as indeed it still is, but when we Jews were a young people we were weak and adopted the evil customs of the heathen if we traded with them."

"But why apply it now, when all the world is coming under one Empire?" replied the Greek. "Is one member to say that another is too wicked to be traded with? Our gods used to be exclusive, too, but we have changed all that now."

"But your gods are not true gods," Paul declared indignantly. "Do you expect the one true God will alter His Holy Law to increase the trade of the Empire? There is only one God, and all the nations of the world must worship Him in time."

"Everybody says that of his own god," said the Greek. "But it may be so, for all I know. I don't say that it isn't.

I constantly say we have far too many gods. That Temple of yours impresses me, though I've never been able to get into the part where you celebrate your mysteries. No matter what the people at home say of you, I always tell them that you are not atheists. You may worship in an empty Temple, but it is fine enough to hold any god. Though, from what I learn as I trade with your people, your god makes some devilish uncomfortable Laws." He broke off and laughed, and then added, "I don't wonder you travel all over the Empire or anywhere else to escape from them."

"But we take them with us wherever we go," Paul cried. "And God has promised us eternal life if we fulfil them."

"Has he?" asked the Greek, serious at once. "That is worth looking into. I love my life and would do a great deal to prolong it. You seem to know all about these things. But I beg your pardon, of course you would, if you are a teacher. You are a philosopher also, I think, are you not?"

"I am not what you Greeks would call a philosopher. I am a missioner to the Empire."

"Trying to carry your Law all over the

world? Well, it is not a bad plan. Do you make any sort of a living at it?"

"My father has enough," Paul said. "He is a merchant also, and specialises in haircloth from Cilicia. But we scribes are not allowed to take payment for our teaching. I have been taught a trade by which I could earn my living. I am a tent-maker."

"A tent-maker, are you? . . . But you look quite well off?"

"My father is rich," said Paul.

"Well, at any rate, your god is better than these uncanny gods of Egypt," said the Greek. "I would like to hear more of him. There is a fellow travelling with us now; he asked to come for the sake of safety. He travels in perfumes. He worships all sorts of atrocities, birds' heads on men's legs, cats and cows. Egypt's a horrible country packed with dead. Even if I could get a licence for a grain ship I'd never want to go back. But if you are interested in other people's gods you can talk to the Egyptian."

By this time they had reached Emmaus. The hills on each side were terraced for vines, and the apple-trees in the orchards were in full flower. Paul explained that he must turn off here, as he had arranged to

stay to rest. The Greek was reluctant to part from him. But his camels had gone on before and he did not wish to turn the whole train back again. They must by this time have reached beyond the bridge which the Romans were building over the stream in the ravine.

" Cannot you catch us up there, and we can talk as we go ? " said the Greek. " Or if that is impossible, we are sleeping the night at Modin, and could meet again at the inn there. I am a lover of philosophy and I will bring you the Egyptian."

Paul agreed, and so it was arranged. The Greek rode on to join his caravan and Paul went to the house of the muleteer's brother.

III

The muleteer dismounted at a wooden gate in the blank wall, and pushing open one of its leaves led Paul's mule into a silent courtyard. A small jackass was tied to the wall in one corner, and stood half-asleep with his head hanging down. He woke up at the sound of men and mules and stretched his neck leisurely. Then he opened his mouth and he-hawed loudly, but nobody came out of the closed house door.

"They must be in the fields," the muleteer said, as he helped Paul to dismount. "My brother works hard. He has a vineyard and a small orchard. When I was here in the autumn he had just got another field and was ploughing for wheat. I will take you to the arbour and go and find him."

The other men took charge of the mules, and Paul followed the muleteer across the courtyard and through a door in the opposite wall. Outside there was a narrow

strip of garden planted with vegetables, and near the door a rough shelter of posts had been built against the wall. The delicate young tendrils of the vine that covered the roof were not yet thick enough to shut out the rays of the sun, and the light trickled through the open spaces between their transparent leaves and fell on the bare head of a man sitting on a wooden bench beneath them. His head-shawl and a shabby upper garment had been thrown aside and lay on the ground, and the man himself in a sweat-stained tunic sat with his head sunk in his hands, hearing nothing.

The attitude was one of such despair that Paul said in a low voice :

" Something is wrong," and the muleteer called out :

" Why, Jonathan ! What has happened ? "

The man raised his head and stared at them with dull eyes. For a moment he did not recognise his brother, and then his mind seemed to give a jump, for he sprang to his feet and cried :

" Do not bring the gentleman near me. I am unclean."

Paul recoiled a step, but the muleteer stood his ground.

"Is anyone dead in the house?" he asked. "Nobody came out when the ass roared."

"No! No! It is not as bad as that, praise God!" said the man. "My wife has gone to see the old priest. She has the boy with her." He wiped his hot face with a corner of his tunic. Paul saw that his short hair was clogged and matted together with sweat and his face burnt almost black by the sun. He noticed, too, that his manners were more independent than those of his brother, and concluded that he owned his land.

"Will you not tell us what is wrong?" he asked kindly.

The man looked at him doubtfully, and the muleteer said:

"This gentleman is a friend of the Rabbi Gamaliel. I am taking him to Joppa."

"If he is a friend of his I will certainly tell him," Jonathan said in a shaking voice, and, turning to Paul, he began to pour out a confused and agitated mind.

"It is this way, sir. When our father died in the spring, we had to offer sacrifice. The house was purified too. You remember, Brother? I had to go to Jerusalem. You helped us. Well, when my boy was born last autumn, I had to go again to the

Temple. A man who comes here . . . one of the soldiers who works on the bridge . . . said to me, 'Don't pay. Priests all the world over do these things.' But I paid. I ransomed the boy handsomely. Five shekels for him, and a lamb instead of two pigeons for his mother. The old priest . . . he was here before I was born, sir . . . has always been kind . . . not like this new man. I knew from the first day I saw him that he would be nothing but a curse to the village. The old man said it was more than was necessary, but I paid. I said nothing to the new man about it. He doesn't like me. He made a row at the threshing floor last harvest, when the tithe was being settled. He wanted his share of it, but I stood up for the old man. I hadn't got my new field into wheat then, so he said it wasn't my business . . . and since then he's always got his knife into me. . . . He said I was breaking the Law because I ploughed with an ox and my little ass. So I was, sir, but everybody does it. How can we afford two oxen? For the sake of peace I gave in then and sold the ox. But you see, sir, we had paid for our father and I had paid for the boy, and what with two per cent. for the priest and ten for the

Levites there is little left, when we have fed, to go to the next year. My new trees, too, just coming into bearing . . . all the crop will go to the Temple . . . and the first fruits of everything . . . and every third year a tenth for the poor when we are the poor ourselves."

He sat down on the bench again, and hid his face in his hands. Paul saw how grimy and worn by work the hands were, and with a pang of pity made a step forward, but Jonathan looked up quickly with a warning. "Don't touch me, sir, or you will have to go back to Jerusalem." Then he turned to his brother and said:

"Get the gentleman something to sit on. There is a stool just inside the courtyard that I have not touched."

The muleteer fetched the stool and Paul sat down. There were too many priests, he thought. They could not all live in Jerusalem. It would be better if there were fewer and they all lived near the Temple.

"Go on with your story," he said, and Jonathan began again.

"Well, sir, not long after this I was ploughing single-handed with the ass my new field near the vineyard to get it ready before the wet season; it is a good field . . . the earth is deep. I ploughed it every

inch, and in one corner I came on the bones of a man. The head was severed from the body, but perhaps by time and decay only. What was I to do? We had paid for our father and I had paid for the boy, and now that I should come on a dead man. Was there ever such bad luck?"

"What did you do with the bones?" Paul asked.

"Hid them," said the man. "I poked them in where the earth was deepest. It is a good field. But I did not see that a neighbour was watching me, and afterwards he came to me by night . . . Matthias is his name . . . and said that unless I paid him something he would tell the new priest, and I was afraid, and I paid, and I paid again, and now I can pay no more, and he has told the priest."

"Why did you touch the bones?" the muleteer put in. "Why didn't you leave them there and tell the Elders?"

"I pulled them out of the ground before I saw what they were. They were covered with earth. A man can't think of everything when he is ploughing hard. The Roman soldier . . . he comes for figs and their vegetables . . . he said it is all very well for rich people, but that if we purify much more we'll starve."

"You are exaggerating. You know it is only a proportion and a small one at that." Paul spoke more sternly than he had meant to do, but he was annoyed that he should feel such sympathy with a man who evidently allowed himself to think loosely about the Law.

The cultivator shook his head.

"It is easy to see that you don't work for your living, sir. Every time I have to go to the Temple I lose a day's work. And I can't trade when I am unclean. Who will buy my vegetables? And there is another thing, sir," he went on before Paul could reply. "Those first times I did more than the priest asked, but when I got to the Temple there were hundreds of beasts waiting to be slaughtered. The priests were in such a hurry that I couldn't get attended to for hours. I never saw such a crowd. When at last I did get into the Inner Court there were masses of flesh piled on the tables. Hundreds of good young bullocks that had never been touched by a yoke slaughtered, and the land crying out for tillage. I couldn't help thinking, sir, what was my little sacrifice among so many? Would God ever notice it? I wouldn't grudge it, truly, sir, if it was only once a year. But

any day an accident may happen. The soldier laughed when I told him that if we touch a dead mouse we are unclean. 'How can that hurt your god?' he said. 'Did he not make the mouse, too?'"

A voice deep inside Paul seemed to shout out suddenly that the man spoke sense, but he silenced it at once. The horrible smell of blood and fat was in his nostrils again, but that was surely only a trick of his imagination?

"It is quite true that God made the mouse also," he answered earnestly. "But the Roman does not know that we have been chosen by God for His special people, and that Israel as a nation is therefore bound to obedience to His commands."

"He is a very kind man," said the cultivator.

"That has nothing to do with it," said Paul. "It is a question of obedience only. If God has appointed a certain way in which He will be served, who are we to say we prefer another method?"

"You have been very silly," said the muleteer. "If you had told the Elders, then neither the priests nor God could have been offended, and there would have been no bother."

"What is the good of blaming me?"

cried his brother. "Don't I see how foolish I was? I don't like disgrace any more than you do, but what is to be done? The question now is, how am I to get out of this mess? I know a Levite who lives in the next village, sir. Do you think he would be of any use?"

Paul shook his head. He was thinking hard.

"It is not a question for a Levite, and they have no influence," he said. "You must go to the Scribes. I will give you a letter to a friend of mine in Jerusalem. He will have it argued out for you. You see, you did not sin in ignorance. You knew that you were breaking the Law and you committed a fraud. It is an interesting point as to whether you should plead fraud or ordinary uncleanness. You have been in a state of pollution for weeks. You may have to offer two lambs."

The man who had been listening stupefied, protested.

"But where am I to get two lambs? I have no flocks."

"Surely you can buy lambs," Paul began, but Jonathan interrupted him bitterly:

"And where is the money to come from?"

" What is money compared with breaking the Law of God? " Paul asked sternly.

" That is a rich man's notion. I could have settled it long ago if I had had money. But how can I buy lambs with nothing? " Jonathan repeated hopelessly. His cruel disappointment was so evident that Paul found himself explaining.

" But you must be purified at any cost. If one man is unclean all the land is unholy. You cannot expect that God will allow us to soil Him with our impurities. How can He dwell amongst us if we are defiled? "

At this the man broke down utterly.

" There is no end to it," he wailed. " Just when I was getting on a little. I did not mean any wrong. I thought at first that they were roots. Then I was afraid and hid them. Two sets of cooking pots, and if the wife defiles one, then it has to be broken. And the Sabbath, too. I never even pick up a stick. When the vegetables need water I may give them a little, but I suppose they will watch for that now, and I shall be in disgrace again."

" Use your common sense. Most of these things are simple matters that a bath will settle," Paul said severely.

There was something dangerous about the man. He raised problems which could

only be settled by long and careful argument, but could he understand the arguments if they were put before him?

"Why should I be the only one to get into trouble?" Jonathan sat up straight and put the question to Paul. "There is Matthias now. He never picks up sticks on the Sabbath—oh no! But he rakes them towards him into a heap and then he pulls the bundle after him with a cord, and is anything ever done to him? Never! There are people in this very village, sir, and they come by night and steal my vegetables, and are they ever caught? Never! But because I touch an old bone I have to pay again when I have already paid so much. I did no real wrong, but the sneak who told on me escapes."

"He needn't," said the muleteer grimly. "There are ways."

Paul spun round on his stool and faced him.

"Are you advising vengeance?" he asked sternly

The muleteer, taken aback, said:

"Well, we are only human. Somebody must help him."

"Revenge will not help. Vengeance belongs to God. Do not meddle with it," Paul said, and turned to Jonathan.

" And you," he said, " banish from your mind the idea that to get on is the end of man's life. God does not bribe us to serve Him. If we hope for salvation we must serve with a disinterested heart."

" Do the priests serve God for nothing? " Jonathan cried. " They get their food without labour or toil. I wish I'd been lucky enough to have been born a son of Aaron. If they were forced to dig a living out of the land they would know what our troubles are."

" It would not be seemly if those who serve God at the Altar were in poverty," Paul said sharply.

" But the priests get all the best parts," said the muleteer suddenly.

" You are mistaken. They only get a share of the sin and trespass offerings. The burnt offerings are all consumed," Paul replied hastily.

" But they get the skins. They make a lot out of them," said the man.

" You do not understand the inner meaning," Paul asserted vehemently. " All these customs are meant to teach us piety. Unless we had them we should forget God utterly. But now every time you offer the first fruits of your necessary food . . . every time you make bread and give a loaf

to the priest, you remember God. Is there a greater blessing in the world?"

Jonathan shook his head.

"Poor people can't forget God," he said. "They live too close to want. Even when we go short the priests always have enough. I don't grudge it to our old man, but they say he may soon feel the pinch, too. It seems that this new man means to seize the tithe straight from the threshing floor, and that the higher priests in Jerusalem are backing him up. Perhaps you have heard of it, sir?"

"I heard something said about all first fruits being taken first to the Temple, and from there carried out by the priests and divided," Paul admitted.

"That's what I heard, too," Jonathan nodded, knowingly. "And they say that there won't be much to come back from Jerusalem after the division. If that is so our old man will starve."

"I hope it is only gossip," Paul said, coldly. It was not a subject, he felt, which he could discuss with a peasant. He had seen with dismay the growing wealth of the priests in Jerusalem, and Gamaliel had spoken of the avarice of the High Priest which threatened the spiritual side of the Temple worship. Was that

greed organising in the villages, or was it only an isolated priest here and there who presumed?

Jonathan seemed to feel the aloofness in Paul's manner, for the blood rose to his cheeks (making him, Paul noticed, almost as black as a negro), and to hide his confusion he stooped down and picked up the old cloak that lay on the ground.

"Ah, well," he said morosely, "when money speaks all else is silent. It seems to me that only the rich will ever be saved. As things stand now we must either break the Law or give up our living. A man works hard, day in, day out, for his family, and all at once he finds he is disgraced."

"There is no disgrace in poverty, but only in disobedience," Paul said kindly. He was sorry he had snubbed the man.

"I suppose it is with shame as with this old rag. The more it is worn the less you think of it," Jonathan said. He stood up to shake the dust from the cloak, and Paul saw that there were tears in his eyes. Suddenly, to his own astonishment, for the man was clearly a rebel, he found himself offering help.

"I will pay for your cleansing," he said.

Jonathan shook his head.

"I am a poor man, but I am not a

beggar. I will take no man's money unless I have earned it," he said.

"But it is my right, for the defilement falls on us all," Paul insisted. It was mockery to offer help to a man who defied God's law, but he could not help doing it!

"You have a good heart, sir, but I will find the money somehow." He seemed to struggle with something in his mind for a moment, and then he said:

"There is one thing you might do for me, if you will. I am no scholar, sir, and you are. I hear the Law read aloud every Sabbath in the synagogue. It does say, doesn't it, that God is our Father and that He looks to the heart only?"

"There are passages to that effect," Paul replied.

"Then why is He so hard on us, sir?"

"Has a father no rights over his children?" Paul asked.

"Yes, but, sir," the man persisted, "could I be so angry if the boy offended me?"

"Oh, shut up with your questions," said the muleteer suddenly. "You worry me. How can the gentleman understand? Why, he doesn't even live in Judea. When I come back you must come with me to Gamaliel. He'll get you out of it;

and see here—I'll pay. You have been a fool, but families must stick together. When we know what it comes to I'll settle the bill."

"I must help too," Paul began, but stopped short. The courtyard door banged loudly, and there was a sound of running footsteps. The ass he-hawed noisily, as a voice called: "Jonathan! Jonathan! Where are you?" and a young woman in the blue dress of a peasant burst through the doorway.

"You are to come at once, Jonathan. He will help us. I have told him all," she cried; and then, seeing strangers, she fell back against the wall and groped behind her for her veil.

"Where's the boy? What has happened?" Jonathan asked, excited by her excitement, and his wife, giving up the vain search for her veil, said triumphantly:

"He has kept him. He held his finger and smiled at him. He has won his heart. Oh, our priest is a good old man. He said you were to come at once."

"I'm coming. You go on back to the boy." Jonathan hastily wound on his head-shawl, talking all the time. "You must have something to eat, Brother, before you go. There are figs and nuts

just inside the house. I haven't touched them. I can't ask you to rest here, sir, nearly everything is unclean. But take some figs. He knows where they are kept. You have been very kind, sir. Thank you."

He threw on his old cloak and ran through the doorway. Paul heard the sound of his steps as he raced across the courtyard after his wife, and then the outer door banged again and he heard no more.

IV

The muleteer pulled the girth of the saddle tighter.

"I suppose in the days of Moses everybody had beasts?" he asked.

"Yes, I suppose they were all pastoral," Paul replied absently. He was worried. How stupid he had been! There must be some way to state truth that was unanswerable.

"And now everybody has market gardens." The muleteer went to the mule's head to hold the bridle while Paul mounted. Paul swung himself into the saddle.

"Not everybody," he said. It must be that he was without power or he could have brought Jonathan to a right view of the Law. He was inadequate. That was why he felt muddled and sore. He had not solved one of Jonathan's problems; but how could he when the priests . . .?

The muleteer handed him the reins.

"It isn't easy to do what Moses ordered nowadays, is it? When it comes to sacri-

fice it's hard on a man who has no cattle of his own," he said.

Paul pulled his cloak from under him and settled himself in his saddle.

" He can always buy the legal offering, and if he has nothing else he can offer himself," he began inattentively, and then suddenly his brain cleared, and he grasped what the man was saying with all its implications. He sat back in the saddle, his whole mind intent on this new thought.

" You mean that when circumstances have changed the Law ought to change too ? " he asked.

" No, no, sir ! " The muleteer was horrified. " I meant nothing wicked like that. The Law cannot change. You couldn't think I meant that."

Paul looked the man straight in the eyes, and then he nodded.

" I am sure you meant no wickedness," he said. The man obviously meant nothing. He was honest but stupid.

The head man, relieved, ran to open the gates, and Paul rode slowly out of the courtyard. These brothers were ignorant, but they had raised problems of which he could not rid himself. A good man was one who kept the Law, a bad man one who broke it. Jonathan, who attracted him so

strangely, was a sinner. He cared more for his wife and child than he did for the Law. But surely God, who never asked impossibilities of His creatures, had planted in Jonathan his love of his family? And if so . . .? Behind Paul the men were shutting the great doors. How restless those mules were! The Law contained an answer to every problem; but when the priests . . . No, he must not allow himself to think that. He was a scribe and a rival. The mules would not stand to be mounted. They wanted to catch up to their stable companion. They trampled about, scraping their hooves on the stones of the street. Paul pulled up and turned in his saddle to watch the men mount. Gamaliel kept his beasts in good condition, or did he leave it all to the head muleteer? The mules started off before all the men were in the saddle. One rider had to throw himself across his kicking and plunging beast, but it quieted down when it reached Paul's mule. The man found his seat, and they all rode out of the village.

Beyond Emmaus, Paul and his men descended into the ravine and crossed the bed of the stream which the Roman soldiers were bridging. The stream was almost dry now, but the centurion in charge, to whom

Paul spoke, told him that it ran full to the bridge piers when there was rain. He showed Paul the half-finished bridge, and explained how the keystone locked the arch together, expressing wonder that the Jews had been content for so long with fords. Paul heard him with one ear while the other listened to what the muleteers and the soldiers were trying to say to one another. It was evident that no man knew more than a word or two of any tongue but his own. They soon dropped the attempt to talk and began to give one another lessons. Paul heard the word "bridge" bandied about in Latin and in Greek and in Aramaic. There were one or two other languages which were unknown to him. He must ask the head man what they were, he thought, as he gave the centurion a piece of money, but when they began to climb out of the ravine he forgot and did not remember again until they halted for their midday meal.

The dust on the road to Modin was even worse than that on the road between Jerusalem and Emmaus, and the road was as rough. Sometimes they had to dismount to pick their steps down a steep and rocky pass or to pull the mules up the crumbling stairs of a soft limestone valley. The sun,

now high, blazed on their backs and burnt through their clothing. They passed Colonia, the Roman camp that overlooked the valley, built high up on a promontory where two glens joined; and some miles beyond they came to a narrow ravine whose steep sides shut off the rays of the sun. A few oak-trees grew half-way down, and the stream that ran at the bottom was cold and fresh. The head man decided to halt here. It was not yet noon, but if they were to get to Modin that night, he said, they must rest the mules. There was no danger from brigands here as the Roman influence extended far beyond Colonia.

Paul shook the dust from his clothes and washed his hands and face before he ate his lunch of parched corn and dried figs. The men watered the mules and tied them to the oak-trees, where they fed them with barley taken from the saddle-bags. Then they washed too, and ate their meal. Afterwards they slept. They were all tired out.

Paul could not sleep. It was always like that with him. After great exertion, when his bodily activity had ceased, his mind took possession of his brain and tired him still further by asking questions. The head man, too, did not seem able to sleep,

but sat near the stream mending a saddle-bag. Paul remembered that he had meant to ask him about the soldiers, so he called, and the man threw aside the bag and came over to him.

"Oh, no, I never sleep in the open air," he said in answer to Paul's question. "It is not safe. The evil spirits have power over you then. They can steal your soul from your body while you sleep."

"It is a mistake to be afraid of them. You give them more power over you. And what about the other men? Are they in no danger?" Paul asked.

"I warned them. They must take their chance. It is not as if it were night," the muleteer went on apologetically. "When I camp at night I always see that they sleep with their feet towards the fire. Then the foot-lickers that come from the mountains can't get at them to lick the soles off their feet. They draw your soul out of your body that way."

"I never heard that before. Who told you that?" Paul asked.

"A Roman soldier, sir. I met him at Joppa. He was a Persian, I think."

"If you gave your whole mind to prayer God would protect you and you would not think so much of these things. And that

reminds me," Paul went on. "I heard you talk to the soldiers at the bridge. Did you ask of what races they were?"

The muleteer at once began to excuse himself.

"I never speak to any but Jews when I am in Jerusalem," he said. "But the Master is too kind to refuse to speak to people when he meets them on the road. To let them into his house is another matter. I have to know something of other languages, sir. Poor people must live. If you are a muleteer you've got to rub shoulders with all sorts of people."

"I have to rub shoulders with all sorts of people, too," Paul said. "How else could I spread our holy religion?"

The muleteer gave a sigh of relief, and his manner, though still respectful, became more easy.

"Those soldiers are good customers of my brother. I didn't see the one he knows best. They tell him a lot. From all I hear, sir, there'll be a big row in the Roman army one day."

"What makes you think that?" Paul was interested at once. "I thought their discipline here was splendid."

"It may be. I don't know about that. They have to work cruelly hard, and they're

flogged, too; but that isn't the worst of it. I saw you give that money to the centurion, sir, but he doesn't need it. He pinches their wages."

"How? Does he pay them?" Paul asked.

"I don't know about that, but he makes them pay him every time they want to get off duty and every time they have leave of absence. They told my brother they hate being in this country."

"Does the centurion make them pay more here than in Italy?" Paul asked.

"That's not it. It's because this is a poor country. They can't make it up in other ways here. It seems that in Italy they can rob right and left, and the rich are so frightened they daren't say a word. It oughtn't to be allowed, sir, ought it?"

"It can't be universal, or the Empire would go to pieces," Paul replied. "There were disturbances in the army when Augustus died, but order was soon restored. Perhaps it is only in one or two regiments. Some of the legions may have enlisted idle, worthless men. Rich people in Rome live in luxury and vice, so of course they become cowards. You cannot discipline others unless you discipline yourself."

The muleteer agreed.

" That's so, sir. If I didn't work with my men I'd get no work out of them. But these Romans . . . they give their orders and expect to be obeyed. They seem to think they own the whole world. Why is that, sir? "

" They do own it," Paul said. " They are clever and prudent, and their government is better than that of other nations. That is how they have brought us all into the Empire."

" They are queer beggars," the head man meditated. " They seem to have some sort of worship of their own, but every man has a different god. My old grandfather can remember the time when every village round here had a High Place with a god of its own! But these pagans worship goddesses too. Somehow I could never take up with a goddess. But most of the soldiers don't bother much about any religion, even their own."

" The most ignorant modern Jew has been taught what the greatest Gentile philosopher does not know, that there is one God only, invisible and without body," Paul said emphatically.

" They have never had a Law-giver like Moses or any prophets like ours to hammer it into them, have they? " the muleteer

asked. His stiffness had quite worn off, and he spoke as one man to another, and not as an inferior to a superior.

"Their philosophers have had imaginations, but no one has ever taught them of the true God," Paul replied.

"I thought you were doing it, sir."

"It's too big a job for one man." Paul was pleased. The man evidently liked him.

"If anybody can do it, you can, sir," said the muleteer.

"I have given my life to it," Paul replied. He was not a failure with the muleteer. But then the man had lived for years with Gamaliel in the atmosphere of Jerusalem and the Temple. It was harder to impress his brother, who lived further away, and still more hard to influence men who, like the Greek merchant, had had no training in the Law. And beyond the Greek there were more men ignorant of the Law, and beyond those men still more men, all ignorant. Some of them had never heard of Moses. Paul's mind ran on making pictures. Beyond Judea there was Northern Syria, beyond Syria and beyond his own province of Cilicia there were the other provinces of Asia, beyond them Greece and Italy. And beyond Italy was Spain, and beyond Spain the wilds of

Britain and Iverna. And Egypt and India, Arabia and Mauritania. If the power of all these wicked old gods was to be broken and the knowledge of the one true God brought to the world, the Law must be preached in all those countries. But what a task! If he had strength . . . if he had resolution? Could the voice of one Jew, and a Jew weakened by defects of the body, echo all over the world? But God was surely leading him, and with God everything was possible. Paul's mind suddenly burst into a flame. Could it be that he, a man of whom the Empire had never heard, had been chosen . . .?

"Well, it's time to be starting. I must wake those men," said the muleteer, and Paul's dream vanished.

V

When Paul rode into the inn at Modin the first person he saw, in one of the rooms under the arches of the arcade that ran round the courtyard, was Fortunatus the Greek, who sat on a saddle-bag pulled to the edge of the platform, a position from which he could overlook the whole khan. The room behind him was piled with bales, his horses and mules were settled for the night in the stalls under the opposite arches, and below him in the dust the unloaded camels lay in easy rest, chewing the cud, each beast secured by a tourniquet screwed round one flexed front knee.

The Greek was talking to someone who sprawled on a bale of wool, half hidden in the dusk of the windowless room, but he broke off when he saw Paul and hailed him loudly.

"Hallo! How late you are! I told my men to keep stalls for your mules. Come up here. The others have gone to see the Monument, but I waited for you."

Paul slipped from his saddle and gave the reins to the head man. He was hot and dirty. They had climbed down and down all afternoon into hotter country, leaving behind the breezes on the heights from which they could see the sea, and dropping to the plain in which Modin stood half-way up its mound. The worst descent had been the one when the road, bad as it was, had faded away into a track which in one place was only the face of the rock with a torrent racing across it.

" What a wonderful ride, and how lovely the flowers are ! " cried the Greek.

" Are there flowers ? I never saw them," Paul replied, surprised. He dropped his cloak round him to hide his legs. From his earliest youth he had hated strangers to see how crooked they were. It did not matter when people knew you. He waddled a little as he crossed the corner of the yard and, avoiding a snap from a sour-faced camel, mounted the step to the alcove in which Fortunatus sat. The air was heavy with scent and the place buzzed with flies.

" How stiff you are ! So am I," said the Greek, and turning to his companion, he added : " Pull down a wool bale for him."

The other man reached up a long arm

and pulled down a bale, which he pushed across to Paul.

" This is Jannes the perfumer," Fortunatus went on, as Paul with a word of thanks sank on to the soft bale of wool, sniffing the scent that filled the air. " It is his balsam you smell. He's been abusing me all day because I rode a mule."

" Neither of you would be stiff if you had ridden camels," Jannes replied. He was a dark-faced young man with a little pointed beard, that curled back from his chin tip, and a hard, shaved mouth cut straight across his face. Was he a descendant of the magician whom Moses had conquered? Paul was reminded of somebody . . . or something.

" Is this your first visit to Judea? " he asked politely.

" Yes," Jannes replied; " I came from Egypt to buy balsam from the orchards at Jericho. I'm buying drugs and spices too."

" Everybody cleans their teeth now with powders from abroad. He's made a new one of Arabian drugs," Fortunatus put in.

" I hope that you like Judea? " Paul asked. Why did the man remind him of home . . . of sunset and his father's summer villa on the hills above Tarsus?

" It is not so barbarous as I was led to believe," Jannes admitted. " But camels are the only beasts for your roads. Here are these people almost dead with fatigue and I am as fresh as if I'd sat all day at my ease in a chair. You don't feel the motion of a dromedary. He walks with such long, regular strides."

" You'd think none of us had ever ridden a camel but yourself," Fortunatus said crossly. " I hate the ugly beasts with their ungracious minds. Their smell makes me sick. We got into the middle of them today and I was nearly stifled. Their humps were like walls shutting us in. The mule didn't like it either. We got out as soon as we could."

Jannes laughed. (" What an unpleasant laugh ! " Paul thought.)

" I didn't know that a camel had a mind. If his paces are good, that is enough for me," he said. Paul, watching his face, began to think of a flock of goats . . . sunset on the hills above Tarsus. The goats marched together driven by a goatherd in skins. Their clear, shining eyes could see behind as well as in front. Their mouths were straight and thin, and their little beards hung down under their chins. Those pale, prominent eyes had a mocking,

contemptuous stare. . . . Why, of course! The man was just like a goat. . . . So that was why he had thought of home?

"If you are in a hole a horse will try to get you out of it. He has a gallant mind," the Greek was speaking. "A mule has character too, even if it's mostly vicious. But a camel has a mean mind He wants to do you an injury. Oh, isn't it hot?" He broke off suddenly. "What wouldn't I give for a drink of water cooled with snow! Let us go up the hill and see the Monument."

"Is it worth seeing?" asked Jannes.

"Worth seeing?" echoed the Greek. "Why, don't you know how good some of the things here are? Haven't you seen the Temple?"

"I looked at the outside. Not bad. I didn't bother to go inside. You must remember that I'm accustomed to the Temples of Egypt," Jannes replied.

"Foreigners are only allowed in the Outer Courts. They are forbidden the Inner Courts. If they are found there the penalty is death," Paul said coldly. Had the man always a sneer on his face?

"But there isn't anything to be seen inside, is there? Aren't you Jews atheists, and isn't your Holy Place empty? I

thought that no god had an image there?" Jannes asked.

"We worship the one true God. What intellect could form an image of Him?" Paul replied.

"It's nonsense to say the Jews are atheists," said the Greek. "I always contradict that when I hear it. They may not have a Temple filled with gods in feathers and scales, or even fur skins," he winked at Paul, "but the God of the Jews promises them more than the bull, or the goat, or the crocodile, or the cat, or the dog-faced baboon does the Egyptians! Isn't that so?" he asked Paul.

"I am tired of your foolish jests," Jannes interrupted angrily. "What do either of you know of my religion? You can only see the outside, and yet you talk as if you knew all about it."

"Why, I've been in Egypt for months at a time. I know all I want to know," Fortunatus said contemptuously. "I've seen your bull god—what's his name? Apis? They let him out of his stall. He frisks about, and then the priests catch him and tie him up again."

"I make no jest of any man's worship," Paul protested. "I confess I know little of yours, but false religions are all alike.

The religion of the Jews is as high above them as the one true God is above the brutes you worship. No Jew could entertain such a wicked notion as imagining the Deity in the likeness of wild beasts or cattle of the field."

"It is not the image but the power that we worship," Jannes said eagerly. "We know that the greatest of the gods is the sun . . . Ra, the Lord of Life who gives virility to men . . . but we adore him in the form of a lion because of its strength, and as a bull and a ram because of their fertility."

"Disgusting!" Paul declared. "Images taken from the wilderness and the farm are vile. The true God is high above such lusts."

"But you must have some image," Jannes remonstrated.

"I tell you No!" replied Paul. "God created the heavens and the earth. How can you make a likeness of the Creator out of things He has Himself created? He has forbidden us to fall down before images of anything He has made, whether in the sky, or sea, or on the earth. He can be seen by the mind alone. All other worship is indecent."

"Indecent! Why, our religion is the

oldest in the world, and we were never given those commands." Jannes was losing his temper again.

"You would not listen to them when they were given. God gave them to Moses," Paul said, but Jannes broke in indignantly:

"Moses! But Moses was an Egyptian priest. I know all about him. He invented the Jews' religion."

"Moses was not an Egyptian," Paul contradicted, but Jannes was now too angry to listen.

"He was a ruffian, anyhow. He and his people were put out of Egypt. They came from Ethiopia . . . a disgusting race with loathsome diseases. Our King consulted the Oracle of Ammon-Ra and was told to exterminate them. They were detested by the gods. And to this day the Jews sacrifice rams to show their contempt of Ra."

"We do nothing of the kind," Paul said hotly. "We sacrifice rams because when Jehovah tested Abraham and told him to sacrifice his only son Isaac, Abraham was ready to obey, and Jehovah was pleased and allowed him to sacrifice a ram instead. We are not Ethiopians."

"I don't care what you are. I never heard of Abraham." The Egyptian had

quite lost his temper. "I only know that Moses told his people not to trust any of our gods but to follow him. Just like a Jew. Of course he imagined he knew everything."

"I thought you said he was an Egyptian priest and an inventor of religions?" Fortunatus inquired.

"I don't care what I said. You are always against me. We kicked them out of Egypt, anyway," Jannes said sulkily, throwing himself back against the bales of wool in the shadow.

"You think every man an enemy who tells you the truth," said the Greek, and then, ignoring Jannes, he turned to Paul. "I thought the Jews came from Assyria and had no country of their own."

"Our father Abraham came from Ur of the Chaldees. It was to him that God made the promises. Our prophets have always preached the same religion. Men invent false religions, but the one true religion was given to us by a special revelation." Paul spoke more quietly. He must learn to put a curb on his temper, he thought. He had always been too passionate. It was not the way to make the truth irresistible.

"I wonder if philosophers have special

revelations? Perhaps they invent their philosophy," Fortunatus said doubtfully.

Before Paul had time to reply, Jannes leant forward on his wool bale, emerging suddenly from the dusk, and interjected scornfully:

"The one true religion! Why, the Jews in Alexandria have a regular shop for the invention of new religions."

"I don't think you know much about it," Fortunatus replied tartly. "You say you worship the sun, and now it seems that the god of the Jews created your god."

"He did nothing of the kind," Jannes denied furiously.

Fortunatus shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't know whether he did or did not, but I've heard philosophers say that the sun is only soil and stones, so when you Egyptians produce him and say he is a god it shows you know nothing of philosophy. How could a god be made of earth? It is much more likely that the god of the Jews takes your god round in a chariot to light up the world."

"It was a Jew who said that! If another nation holds anything sacred the Jews are sure to spit on it," Jannes spluttered, white with rage. "If we think an

act impure, that is enough for them; some Jew goes and does it at once."

"It must be impure if an Egyptian refuses it," said Fortunatus.

"If we are bad, we are nothing to the Greeks! Why, the things you told me of Corinth . . ."

"Don't get excited again. It is far too hot, and what has impurity to do with it?" the Greek interrupted aggravatingly.

"It has everything to do with it," Paul put in sternly. "If men are taught that their gods practise wickedness they excuse their own vices. Wickedness cannot come from God, but the Gentiles themselves describe their gods as murderers and adulterers, drunken, even polluted by unnatural vice."

"He's getting at your gods now. Serves you right," Jannes said maliciously.

"There is something in what he says." Fortunatus spoke quite seriously. "Some of the tales of our gods are not to their credit. I can't believe that gods and heroes and demi-gods are no better than men. I don't wonder that nowadays so many men deny their existence. I want something higher myself. If I had not my living to make I should take to philosophy."

" Philosophy will not bring you salvation," said Paul.

" Salvation? What do you mean by that? Is it the eternal life that you said you would tell me about? "

" Yes," said Paul. " Eternal life, the gift of God."

Jannes sat straight up.

" Gift? Do you mean to say that your priests will allow you to have it for nothing? "

" Our priests have no power in the matter." Paul pulled himself up. What about Jonathan and his problems? But the priests never claimed that they could give a man eternal life. " It is given by God at His own pleasure if we obey the Law," he added firmly.

" I can't believe it. Why, with us it's far too expensive for any but the rich. Our priests charge for every ear and eye. Did you say you can get it as a gift? " Jannes asked.

" If we fulfil the Law," said Paul.

" Oh, the Jewish Law! " Jannes' voice was scornful again.

The muleteers had stalled their mules long since, and had carried water from the spring outside the loose stone wall of the inn. The moon had risen, and in its light,

now as bright as day, the head man was crossing the yard, picking his steps amongst the sleeping camels.

"You promised to tell me about it. Let us go up the hill where we can talk in peace. These flies are awful. It will be cool there, and this moon will last for hours." The Greek pushed his round hat to the back of his head and wiped his hot forehead on the hem of his cloak.

The head man balanced Paul's saddle-bag on the edge of the platform, and stood in the yard below. He had got a room above the portico at the other side of the inn, he said. Paul rose.

"I will go and wash first. We could only find sand before the sunset prayer. If you will go on up the hill I will follow you," he said to the Greek.

He pulled his tunic through his girdle and jumped down into the rubbish beneath. The head man picked up the bag again and led the way across the yard. As Paul followed him between the camels, he heard the mocking voice of the Egyptian.

"Why, look at him! His legs are like the horns of the moon."

"Hush! He will hear," Fortunatus expostulated.

"I don't care if he does. I hate Jews.

Swarming all over the world, taking the bread out of the mouths of honest men. He could wash those legs in a cornucopia."

Paul heard no more. The muleteer had reached the yard gate, and with a lump in his throat Paul followed him round the corner of the wall and out of earshot.

VI

Each time Paul thought of the Egyptian's jest a passionate hatred welled up inside him. He could see his pale prominent eyes and the sneer on his goat's mouth. It was horrible to be sneered at. The man's whole face was a sneer. He wanted to belittle you, to pluck all self-respect from your soul. Was there anything in the world so unpardonable? Perhaps it would be better not to go to the Monument? Paul asked himself as he washed. But that would be a confession of cowardice, and besides, he had promised the Greek. He liked the fat man. He could influence him, too.

Before he left the inn Paul pulled both cloak and tunic under his girdle defiantly and tucked them in. What if he did expose his crooked legs? He must learn not to mind what was said of them. He climbed the hill with such vigour that the veils of his turban blew back over his shoulders and the open neck of his tunic

showed the shaggy black hair on his chest. His legs were hairy too. Well, they were probably stronger than the straight limbs of many Gentiles. Gladiators often had bow legs and just such broad sturdy bodies covered with hair. Egyptians were the worst sort of Gentiles. They had always been filled with this ancient envy. If a Jew got an advantage every Egyptian felt deprived of something. Scorn for scorn it would be easy to repay Jannes. He had a long weedy body. Any injury inflicted on a sneerer was justified.

Paul, half-way up the hill, stopped short. Surely just lately he had rebuked someone for planning revenge? Who was it? Why, the muleteer, of course. And was he now doing the same thing? It was the glory of the Law that it made all men equal before God. He must apply to himself what he had urged on the muleteer.

Paul stood still facing his own motives.

The moon was high and there was not a cloud in the sky. Each blade in the tufts of grass at his feet showed distinctly, and the pillars of the cloisters on the top of the hill stood out as clearly as if it were day. On the shady side of the Monument the polished white stones looked black and the seven pyramids cast wedge-shaped shadows.

Far away below beyond the stretch of dim country the sea lay, like a streak of dull silver. There was not a ship to be seen, but the moonlight made a highway across the water. If you followed that path would you come to the crowded cities of Greece and of Italy? Not one man in a thousand over there had heard of the Law. They lived in sin without knowledge of God or hope of salvation. Paul began to talk to himself.

"You fool! Only this morning you dreamt of converting the Empire! Now a silly sneer from a worthless young man throws you so much off your balance that you think only of revenge. Have you forgotten your purpose? God is just. He must mean to give them the Law. When He wants a tool does He choose it for beauty?"

He broke off abruptly and started to climb again.

Someone was talking above him. In that still air sound carried far. Paul caught a phrase or two as he climbed. He was nearly at the top now. Jannes and Fortunatus must be sitting on the base of the Monument.

"I saw it myself. We all stood round and watched. No, no, not in the open

arena! In a room in a side street . . . for a few pence."

Always the same foul talk when pagans get together! What powder from Arabia could cleanse their mouths? Paul thought indignantly and went on round the corner of the Monument to where Jannes and Fortunatus sat dangling their legs with their backs propped against one of the pillars.

The Greek jumped to the ground when he saw Paul.

"There you are! We're discussing your Monument," he cried.

"I heard you," Paul said dryly.

Fortunatus laughed.

"Well, we were . . . a moment ago. But it seems there are other sights to be seen in Alexandria . . . things we'd be ashamed to look at in Corinth, and that is saying a good deal!"

"There is no doubt that for a young man Alexandria is the place to get experience," Jannes said complacently, still dangling his legs and curling and uncurling his sharp little beard with his fingers.

"If you mean experience of evil you can get that in any city of the Empire!" Paul rapped out contemptuously. In the clear moonlight he saw that Jannes' eyes slanted downwards.

"Don't you like bawdy talk?" Fortunatus asked.

"I hate it," Paul replied.

"But it's only talk," said the astonished Greek.

"It's more than talk. It rouses passions . . ."

"That you can't gratify here?" Jannes interrupted.

"That it is wicked to gratify anywhere," Paul finished sternly.

"Oh, come! Don't tell me! It isn't only in Alexandria that mice lick meal!" said the Egyptian, glancing impudently at Paul through narrowed eyelids.

Paul choked. "Don't look at him or anger will master you!" he warned himself and held back his rage.

"Don't be an ass, Jannes! Can't you see he thinks it a sin? Jews are like that," Fortunatus said, and shrugging his shoulders he turned aside to examine the carvings which ran round the base of the Monument.

"He thinks I'm a simple-minded fool who knows nothing of the world!" Paul thought passionately, and went on vehemently aloud:

"I resist vice because God put us into the world to learn to be like Him. Passion

not dominated throws us back to the brutes. If you live like a brute you lose the power to see a higher life."

"Tut! Who lives like a brute? It's natural . . . to any man who is a man!" Jannes replied scornfully.

Paul's anger flared up again.

"Don't look at his eyes or you'll strike him. Look at his feet," he told himself and glanced down. Why, the man's sandals turned up at the toes! How silly. Nobody could walk in things like those. He must be a fool! Paul raised his eyes and looked Jannes straight in the face. The eyes of the Egyptian wavered and he said irritably:

"Oh, all right! Let's talk of something higher."

"The stars?" Fortunatus suggested affably. He was cleaning the dust from the carvings with one finger as he spoke.

"That would shock him more. Aren't they all bastards of your gods?" Jannes leant forward to see what Fortunatus was doing, and the Greek straightened his back to look at the bas-relief he had just cleaned.

"Zeus!" he said. "I'm stiff. I begin to get old! What are these ships?" he asked and smiled at Paul.

"I don't know," Paul replied. Fortunatus couldn't smile in that friendly way if he felt contempt. How the moonlight refined his fat face! Paul's anger vanished and he smiled back again.

"They may be there because Simon Maccabeus made a harbour of Joppa after the Maccabees had beaten Antiochus Epiphanes," he said.

"It's a very bad harbour," Jannes remarked, and settled himself again with his back against the pillar.

"It's a very bad coast. Where did Antiochus come from?" Fortunatus inquired.

"Just like a Greek—always asking questions," Jannes grumbled. "Who are you? What are you? Where were you born and what do you do? And then they begin on your parents."

"Better to burst with curiosity like a Greek than with envy and ill-will like an Egyptian." Fortunatus hoisted himself up to his old seat on the Monument and, patting the place beside him, said to Paul:

"Come up here and tell us why these Maccabees fought."

So Paul hoisted himself up too, and sat between the two men.

"They fought because Antiochus was an

ambitious man," he said, ignoring Jannes and speaking to the Greek. "I'm a poor chronicler for great deeds, but you know, of course, that when your Alexander died his Generals divided the countries he had conquered between them? Well, Antiochus was descended from the one who got Syria. He wanted to make one great nation out of all the races he ruled, and he thought that our religion stood in his way because we worship one God and have only one Temple . . ."

"The Jews in Alexandria have a Temple," Jannes interrupted.

"Not a Temple . . . a synagogue," Paul corrected.

"They are not in the least like Temples. I've been in the one in Corinth. They never sacrifice in them," Fortunatus said, and Paul went on.

"Antiochus ordered us to build temples in every city and put up altars in every village, where he said we were to sacrifice to those Beings whom he took to be gods."

"What a sensible man! Every village ought to have its own god," Jannes commented.

"Would you have us create a god for each village? How often must I tell you there is only one God?" Paul said fiercely.

"Don't bite me!" said the Egyptian. "You couldn't expect this Antiochus to allow the Jewish god to lord it over the gods of all the other nations."

"Other gods are not almighty and Jehovah is," Paul asserted boldly.

"You ought to know by this time what the Jews believe. Do let him tell his story his own way," Fortunatus said sharply, and Jannes answered provokingly:

"Oh, all right. It's his country. Every cock has a right to crow on his own dunghill!"

"I'm not a Judean. I am a native of Tarsus and a Roman citizen," Paul said coldly.

"Why didn't you say so before? I thought you were only a Jew," Jannes said, surprised, and Fortunatus retorted:

"The Jews have more citizens in the Empire than you Egyptians have, though they keep to their own customs so strictly."

"I was brought up in our strictest sect, but my Father and I are both citizens of the Empire," Paul explained.

"Your father too?" Jannes' tone was more respectful.

"Would you have fought this Antiochus?" Fortunatus asked curiously.

" I don't know. I never thought about it," Paul replied doubtfully. " It was his father Antiochus the Great who brought my ancestors to Tarsus. He was very popular with the Jews. He introduced Greek education, but he left our religion alone. When his son tried to force a false religion on us . . . Yes! of course I would have fought!" Paul decided, and abandoning speculation turned to the facts.

" Antiochus built an altar on this very hill where we sit and ordered us to make our first sacrifice to Zeus on it."

" Zeus? But he's a Greek god!" Jannes exclaimed.

" Of course he is! The head of the family, too. Antiochus was a Greek. Haven't you grasped that yet?" Fortunatus said crossly.

" Don't you believe in your own gods?" Jannes asked open-eyed.

" What's that got to do with it?" Fortunatus stared at him. Then he laughed, his good-humour quite recovered, and said :

" It depends on the weather. If it's fine, then there are no gods; but when there's a thunderstorm the sky is full of them. What happened at the sacrifice?"

"There wasn't any," Paul said. If the Greek didn't believe in his own gods . . . ? But best finish the story.

"Apelles, the Greek General, invited everybody to the ceremony," Paul went on again. "He gathered them at the altar and explained what they would gain if they pleased the King by honouring Zeus. After that he asked Matthias the father of the Maccabees to light the first fire. It was meant as an honour; the Maccabees were the great people in these parts. But Matthias refused. He said he must obey God, not the King. At that a man in the crowd stepped forward and offered to take his place, and when Matthias saw this man, a Jew, actually ready to sacrifice to Zeus he could not stand it. He ran in and killed him there. His dead body fell across the altar."

"There was a fight, of course?" said the Greek.

"Yes. Matthias had five sons at his back, and they killed Apelles and some of the soldiers. Then they fled to the mountains, for they knew that the Greek Generals in Jerusalem would march on them with their troops. It was in those mountains over there that the great disaster of the war took place. About a thousand

Jews were hiding in these caves when the Greek army came upon them."

Paul paused. Was he holding their attention?

"They were caught and cut in pieces?" Jannes asked eagerly.

"No; suffocated," Paul replied.

"Suffocated? But how? It isn't possible!"

"Wait." Paul turned to the Greek. "You know that our Law forbids us to work one day in seven?"

"Is that why you divide the year into weeks?" the Greek inquired.

"Yes. When Almighty God made the world in six days He rested on the seventh, so He commanded us to work six and rest one."

"I thought it took fifty-six days to make the world?" Fortunatus demurred politely.

"No, six," said Paul.

"What has your week got to do with this suffocation?" Jannes asked impatiently.

"Everything," Paul replied. "It was a Sabbath when the Greek army came to the mountains, and the Jews could not fight. They hid in the caves, and the Greeks lit fires in the entrances; the smoke drove inwards, and the Jews were all suffocated."

Jannes bounced up as if he could not bear it.

"What fools! What infernal fools!" he cried out excitedly. "Why, in a country like this a thousand men could hold out for years against legions."

"Of course the enemy would always attack on a Sabbath," the Greek commented thoughtfully, and Paul answered eagerly:

"That's what Matthias said. He was not there, and he was horrified when he heard. 'You will do away with the Law by observing it so strictly,' he said to his followers. 'We shall all be killed, and the Law will die with us.' After that they fought Sabbath or no Sabbath."

"Wise man! He won, of course, or there'd be no Monument?" said the Greek.

"There'd have been one to Zeus!" Jannes remarked.

"Yes, he won, but it took a long time," Paul said. "Matthias was dead and the country a desert before Judas Maccabeus entered Jerusalem. He found the gates of the Temple burnt down and its courts like thickets, full of plants which had seeded themselves. But he had established the religion of Jehovah."

For a moment there was silence, and then

Jannes, biting a nail, looked slyly at Paul.

"I wonder what Jehovah thought? They couldn't have won if they hadn't broken his laws."

"You don't understand," Paul said eagerly. "To this day we Jews may fight on the Sabbath if necessary. God allows us to suspend the Law if our enemies take advantage."

"Does he expect they won't take advantage? Doesn't Jehovah know what men are like? You claim that he is greater than all the gods of Egypt, and yet he makes a law which, if you kept it, would lead to your extermination."

"You really don't understand. We may not attack on the Sabbath, but we can defend ourselves."

Fortunatus put a hand on Paul's knee.

"He's trying to get a rise out of you. Shut up, Jannes! These men died for their religion. Even if you don't think it was worth it, you owe them respect. I suppose if the gods exist they can exact what conditions they please. They have the power. So if keeping Jehovah's uncomfortable Laws makes men sure of eternal life I've nothing to say against it."

"But eternal life is the gift of God. Nobody can be sure of it!" Paul cried.

"Does he give it if you break his laws?" Jannes asked shrewdly.

For a moment Paul hesitated. He saw in a flash where the admission might take them. But dare he hold back revealed truth? No.

"It depends on His grace. If we break the Law in even one point we are liable for the breakage of it all," he said firmly.

"But if that's so . . ."

"You mean . . ." Jannes and Fortunatus both spoke at once.

"Let me speak, Jannes. You are only fooling, and I have a special interest," Fortunatus insisted.

"I'm not fooling. This is a serious question," Jannes said indignantly.

"Let's get to the bottom of it, then."

Jannes gave way and the Greek asked Paul:

"Do you mean to say that if a Jew doesn't keep your Sabbath, or eats meat and butter together, or breaks some other rule like that he forfeits eternal life?"

"He can sacrifice and be made clean," Paul replied.

"But only in the Temple in Jerusalem?"

" Yes. The Temple sacrifices are the centre of the Law," Paul admitted, and Jannes broke in :

" But it might be years before he could get to Jerusalem. In any proper religion there are facilities in every town."

" They go to the Temple once a year. If I did that . . ." the Greek persisted. " I mean, if I became a Jew and sacrificed . . ."

" You would have to be circumcised. And the Inner Courts are for Jews only," Paul said.

" Then we can't be on the same footing? Is eternal life only for Jews? "

Paul hesitated. The question went very deep. Was he sure that he himself would live after death? And yet he had kept the whole Law. He must answer honestly.

" We trust in God's mercy, but we have no guarantee of salvation. Even the most righteous Jew who has kept every particle of the Law is not sure," he replied.

" Whew ! " the Greek whistled. " That knocks me out ! If that applies to Jews, what chance should I have? "

" This Jehovah of yours seems to expect you to keep his laws, but reserves the right to diddle you out of the reward ! " Jannes remarked.

"God would not do that. He is just and good," Paul replied indignantly.

"I don't call that just," the Egyptian said contemptuously. "Why, even Osiris, the Lord of Eternity, dare not refuse us eternal life when our priests have said the magical words that bring resurrection and glory, and the libations are properly poured, and the sacred ceremonies performed. But you Jews obey all sorts of unreasonable rules, and then your god catches you out on some small point. I call it beastly unfair!"

"How can God be unfair?" Paul cried. "Is death unfair, which happens to every man? God did not make us for death but for immortality. It is our own fault that we have to die. Adam knew before he disobeyed that the punishment was death; but though God's justice must be satisfied, He is so merciful that even after Adam's sin He gave us another chance of life if we obey the Law."

"What are you talking about now?" Jannes interrupted. "You jump to something new every minute. Who on earth is Adam, and what has he got to do with it?"

For a moment Paul was taken aback and Fortunatus explained.

"The Jews say Adam was the first man, and that Almighty God made him out of clay."

"But he was a Jew, wasn't he? Then why, because he died, have I to die too? He is dead, isn't he?" Jannes demanded.

"He died because he sinned. His sin brought death into the world. We are his sons, so we inherit his punishment," Paul explained.

"And because your Adam sinned I have to die. I never heard such nonsense. Why, I didn't even know there was such a man!" Jannes protested indignantly.

"You can escape death if you accept the Law," Paul said eagerly.

"But you said a moment ago that even a Jew who keeps it all isn't sure he will live again," Fortunatus remonstrated.

"You don't understand. We accept the Law to show God we are humble and we rely on His promises."

"He made no promise to me," Jannes interrupted curtly, and the Greek said:

"I'd no idea it was so intricate."

Something had slipped, Paul felt, and he no longer held the mind of either Egyptian or Greek. But surely men's souls could not be lost because of misunderstanding? He must make another effort.

" If you would study the Prophets . . ." he began.

Jannes snorted and the Greek shook his head.

" I give it up. I could never learn, let alone keep your Law."

" God always understands if we do our best," Paul urged.

" What has it to offer me? Why should I live bound hand and foot for a mere chance . . . in Corinth too? " the Greek replied so reasonably that for the moment Paul felt the case was lost. Where had the muddle begun? With the Sabbath? Were the Maccabees wrong to break it? No, a thousand times No! It was only common sense. . . . Then why had God . . .?

" Why don't you do as I do? " Jannes said. " Pay the priests and leave the rest to them? It's their business to see you get what you've paid for. It takes money, of course, but you must be making a lot. They reunite your soul to your body so that you can go in and out of the underworld."

" Embalmed? How horrible! I hear you gut them! " Fortunatus shuddered.

Jannes stared at him.

" What does that matter? How else

could you get out of the underworld? If your body decayed you'd be done for. First your eyes are given back, and then the rest. They say your soul passes by a flight of steps to visit your body in the tomb, but I don't know about that. It is a great mystery. I dare not say more. The priests have the secret. They would initiate you."

"Thank you, but we have plenty of mysteries of our own," the Greek said ironically. Then he added thoughtfully: "I distrust all gods who can be bought. I am a trader myself. I want a god who is above all these tricks; one I can respect."

"Try Osiris! He knows all about us," Jannes urged. "He was a man before he was a god, and he died, and now he is alive again. We can be made one with him. It's all in our ritual. 'He maketh mortals to be born again. He reneweth himself and maketh himself young like Ra each and every day.' I've heard that intoned ever since I was a child."

"But Osiris is worse than I am myself. The scandals about him are as bad as Homer's tales of Zeus and his whores on Olympus," Fortunatus declared impatiently.

" It wasn't Osiris. It was his mother," Jannes protested eagerly.

Paul gave an exclamation of disgust and the Greek laughed aloud.

" They call him the Divine Mummy ! " he said to Paul, and added flippantly, " I don't believe a word of it. We only say the gods do these things because we want to do them ourselves. The sun is not alive. The moon is not divine . . . unless in her beauty ! Look at her now."

Paul, rather astonished, looked up at the moon and saw that, still shining in a clear sky she was beginning her downward course. The Greek was right. There was a glory about her.

" Why, I see her move ! It's blasphemy to say she's not alive ! And if Osiris is not worthy of worship, why should Jehovah be ? " Jannes demanded angrily all in one breath.

" It's a higher idea. He's respectable, anyhow." The Greek's eyes were still on the moon. He did not speak for a moment, and then he went on :

" If you really want to know why I feel like this. . . . I heard a man talking in the Jerusalem Temple one day. He made me think. Though, after all, I don't know why he should know more than we do.

We may all tell ourselves these tales of the gods, like children in the dark, afraid of being afraid. . . . But no, he wasn't afraid."

"Was he one of our Rabbis?" Hope sprang up again in Paul. God the all-powerful surely meant to turn the Greek's mind!

Fortunatus ceased gazing at the moon and turned to Paul with a puzzled frown.

"I don't know. I suppose so. I don't know why I was so impressed. There was nothing much about him."

"Was he a Jew?" Paul asked.

"He must have been. He was dressed as you are, but in rougher clothes. He was sitting on the steps in the Court of the Gentiles. I should say he was poor. His sandal thongs had been mended. There was a crowd round him and a great discussion was going on. My friend and I went over to hear. My Aramaic is weak, only trade talk, but my friend understands it. The man spoke clearly. People asked questions and he answered. We made it out between us."

"Was he teaching the Law?"

"Well, no. They were talking as we have been, about whether there is any life after death. Isn't it odd what a hold it

has even when we aren't happy here? The teacher said there was, and a man in the crowd . . . an educated man, like you, a lawyer . . . stood up and asked:

"'What must we *do* to get it?' just as I have been asking you. My man looked at him for a bare second . . . I felt he was summing him up . . . and then he asked:

"'What does the Law say?' I couldn't follow all the lawyer's answer. My friend said he was quoting from your sacred books, and that the gist was love God and your neighbour. When he'd done your Rabbi said:

"'That is the right answer. Do that and you shall live.'

"The crowd laughed. I did too. We could all see he had taken the lawyer's measure. There wasn't much loving his neighbour about him! He looked round with his nose in the air . . . we were rather a mangy lot, slaves and ass-drivers and shoemakers . . . and he said:

"'But who *is* my neighbour?' It was cheek, you know, even to people like that! He meant to insult them. But the Rabbi was down on him like a hawk.

"'I'll tell you,' he said."

"What did he tell you?" Paul was interested.

" Oh, a sort of a story ! We all pushed near, and I sat down close to him. That's how I saw his old sandals. It was about a traveller who went from Jerusalem to Jericho."

" Where I buy my spices ? " Jannes asked.

" Yes, where you buy your spices. But you weren't set on by bandits, and this traveller was. They robbed him and beat him . . . I suppose he fought for his money . . . and left him there half-dead at the side of the road. The first man who came past was a priest, and he saw that something was wrong, and carefully went to the other side of the road to avoid finding out what it was ! Then a Levite came along, and he went over and looked at the poor devil but did nothing. He went on too."

Paul gave a grim laugh and the Greek looked surprised.

" Is it something I don't understand ? " he asked.

" I'll tell you later. Don't stop now," Paul answered. The timid self-centred priest afraid to show mercy lest he should be unclean, refusing to look at life outside his sanctuary . . . the futile Levite who saw everything but could change nothing . . . this teacher was clever.

"No foreigner can grasp these local allusions," Fortunatus said. "Aren't your priests unclean if they touch a corpse? Perhaps he was afraid the traveller would die."

"He ought to have taken the risk. Mercy comes first. He was close to the Temple and could have been purified easily," Paul said warmly.

"Perhaps you can explain about the next man who came by?" Fortunatus asked. "I gathered he was some sort of a villain, but the teacher said *he* got off his mule at once when he saw the traveller lying there, and gave him wine and bandaged him up. Then he put him on the mule and took him to an inn. He had to leave him there, but before he went he paid the reckoning in advance so that the wounded man could stay until he was well. A Samaritan, he said . . . that was the word. A good Samaritan. What is a Samaritan?"

Paul's face hardened.

"They live near here . . . a sort of bastard Jew. They've never put the Law first. When the Maccabees fought they gave in and sacrificed to Zeus."

"Oh, that's it, is it? There aren't any good Samaritans? I thought there was a

catch somewhere, from the way the crowd took it up. The lawyer didn't like it either. When the teacher ended the story he asked him straight :

" ' Which of these three was neighbour to the man who fell amongst thieves ? ' He squirmed a lot, but he had to say :

" ' The one who took pity on him,' and the Rabbi said :

" ' Go and do the same yourself.' He got up then and went away through the Beautiful Gate, so he must have been a Jew. I couldn't follow him there. I should have liked to ask him more of his religion. There was understanding in his eye."

" Not always thinking of himself ? " Jannes put in with a side glance at Paul.

" Did you hear his name ? " Paul paid no attention to Jannes.

" I asked. Jesus," said the Greek.

" Jesus ? " Paul was puzzled. Where had he heard the name before ?

" Jesus ? " Jannes echoed. " Why, they were talking about him at my inn. They said people were going mad over him, and that he's the sort of teacher the Jews really like. He's always knocking about with harlots and people like that."

" Perhaps he's sorry for them. Harlots

don't have too good a time," Fortunatus hazarded, and Jannes laughed.

"Oh no, it isn't that. He teaches that prostitutes are nearer the God of the Jews than these righteous Jews who keep all his Law!"

"In some of our Temples they say the same of our gods!" Fortunatus answered.

Jesus! Gamaliel had said he was a good man! But what did Gamaliel know of the world? He idealised everybody.

"He's a dangerous man!" Paul broke out vehemently.

"They said that, too, at my inn," Jannes responded with suspicious sympathy. "They said he was pulling your religion to pieces and soon nobody would sacrifice any more in your Temple. There were no Jews in the inn, of course, but everybody said, as you do, that he was dangerous."

"I don't believe he's dangerous!" said the Greek. "Kindness must be more important than keeping rules! Everybody can't keep the rules . . . how could I in Corinth? But we might love our neighbours. I could love a god who judged us by that. Jesus seemed to think it was enough if we were kind and took trouble. It would be easy to die if the gods were

like that. Pleasant to live, too, if all they demanded of us was mercy and kindness!"

"But if we don't sacrifice the gods will destroy us!" Jannes exclaimed.

"We can't be saved as cheaply as that! No kindness can take the place of sound doctrine!" Paul stopped, too angry to speak.

"Don't bother so much," Jannes consoled him. "They said in the inn that something is sure to happen to him. Your people must put an end to him or he'll put an end to them."

At this Fortunatus suddenly boiled over.

"Kill him, of course! Here comes a man who really knows what we are all groping after and the cry is raised at once, 'Kill him!'"

"But how do you know he knows?" Jannes asked.

"You've only got to look at him," Fortunatus said shortly.

"But he's not even educated," Paul cried.

"Oh. Figs! What does education do for us? The learned men I know don't believe in anything . . . except that we wander in darkness unguided."

"Then you *are* an atheist?" Jannes asked, horrified, and Fortunatus retorted:

"No more atheist than you! I could believe as Jesus does, but what sane man can believe in our gods?"

"Jesus has no authority for his teaching. His god exists in his imagination only," Paul asserted emphatically.

"He spoke as if he knew, but perhaps that's where they all come from," the Greek replied gloomily.

The moon had gone behind a cloud. She was near the end of her course, and with her went the brightness of the white Monument. It was all shadow now, and the country round was black.

Jannes shuddered.

"Let's go back to the inn. They may hear. How I hate the dark!"

"He's frightened of his own gods!" Paul thought, and Fortunatus said ironically:

"Weather again, Jannes? It's dark now, so the gods want to pounce on us! There is a thunderstorm . . . war in heaven! The sun shines . . . no gods to bother us, or the universe full of great glorious beings who live to help us!"

"There is one great glorious being. . . ." Paul cried.

"Jehovah?" The Greek shrugged his shoulders. "We've only your word that

he exists, and according to you he's just like the rest . . . trampling men under His feet in spite of all their prayers and sacrifices."

"Don't talk like that . . . they may do something to us," Jannes entreated, and Paul said severely:

"The very thought of this man Jesus has turned you into a rebel." So Fortunatus rejected the Law because of Jesus. There had been no misunderstanding. What harm, what horrible harm the man was doing!

"I can't forget him," the Greek said simply. Then he shrugged his shoulders again. "After all, what does it matter? In spite of all this teaching, yours or his, we've got to die, and the odds are that death is the end."

"Don't talk about death; it frightens me," Jannes whispered uneasily, and the Greek laughed again.

"Speak out, man! If there are no gods, there's nothing to fear!"

"Don't let Jesus corrupt your mind," Paul pleaded. "He's only a loose thinker, untrained, like too many of our nation. Believe me, salvation can be had if you accept God's plan."

"We've threshed that out before. How

can I?" Fortunatus interrupted impatiently, but Jannes moved a little nearer to Paul.

"Do you really know more than we do?" he asked, and the Greek laughed ironically.

"See what fear will do! Cheer up, Jannes. You are young still. Death may be a long way off from you both. You may welcome it when it comes! Even I may live to be so old that I'll be content to give up and to let my soul flicker out like a flame."

"Never!" Paul cried. "Life will always have value. If you have the gift of living you can never tire." Could any sane man doubt it? Here was something all the world must be sure of.

"Even if we go on for ever, and half alive?" the Greek said sadly.

"Better half alive than not alive at all," Paul declared vehemently. How feeble-minded to be content to flicker out like a flame!

"You are so certain about everything! How do you *know?*" Jannes asked Paul. His contempt had gone, and Paul saw that at last he had touched him. "If I've lost the Greek I may save him," he thought, and suddenly, forgetting Jesus,

he felt full of zeal again, zeal to save Jannes, to save the Greek, to save himself and all the world.

"I tell you there is a God who cares, and I know He will save us from sin, so that we can live for ever," he cried with passion, and in his excitement he jumped to the ground and turned to face the others.

"I can't explain. There are things too great for us to understand. How could I, a man, measure the mind of God? But as surely as I stand here I know that He lives and that we also can live for ever. It says in the Law . . ."

"Oh, the Law! Is that all?" Jannes cut him short. "Come along, Fortunatus; I'm going home. It will be too dark to find the way soon," and he too jumped from his seat.

"It's what every man thinks, 'if you believed as I do!' But who knows what to believe?" Fortunatus, stiff from long sitting, slid to the ground. Paul made no movement.

"Are you not coming?" Fortunatus asked, and Paul shook his head.

"Aren't you afraid to be alone in the dark?" Jannes demanded.

"No," Paul replied curtly.

" Come along, Jannes. Perhaps he wants to pray. The Jews do. Good-night, then," said the Greek, and " Good-night," Jannes echoed, and " Good-night," Paul repeated.

He heard them talking as they went round the Monument. They began to descend the hill and the voices floated back, growing fainter and fainter until at last they ceased, and Paul, all alone in the darkness, squatted down on the ground with a sick sense of failure, and leant his tired body up against the tomb of the Maccabees.

VII

The Orontes had silted up again. It was early morning and there was a slight fog. Paul, who lay half-asleep, propped against his saddle-bags under the fore deck, felt the bump and thought hazily, "Antioch at last! That must be the wharf. Odd that I heard no order to pull up oars." But surely it was not an hour since the rowers had swept the ship round into the bay where the Orontes emptied its mouths and Antioch was a day's sail up the river? Paul's mind began to clear. "Those yells are not from the shore. They are cries of pain. Something has happened." The ship quivered from end to end and slowly settled, and Paul, wide awake now, jumped to his feet.

From where he stood, slightly above the hold, he could see the backs of the rowers. They were in strange confusion. The port oars had thrust back suddenly through the oar-holes, hurling the men on those

benches together and shoving some from their seats. Three or four oars had splintered, injuring the rowers. The men on the starboard, unhurt, were sliding on top of one another after their oars as the tilt of the ship pushed the blades further out through the oar-holes. Just below Paul a port rower, bleeding from a wound in the head, tried to staunch the blood with his manacled hands, and with every movement pulled his oar backwards and forwards. Another man, jammed between the benches, screamed horribly when his companions, hampered by their oar-chains and cursing loudly, tried to pull him back to his seat and in their awkward attempts to disentangle him touched his oar. When the oar had pushed him backwards the bracelet which chained it to his wrist must have broken the bone, for Paul, who jumped down to help, saw that inside the iron band the man's hand wobbled unnaturally. At either end of the ship, above the cries of the rowers, he heard men shouting orders, and as he steadied the heavy oar and held the chain so that no weight could press on the broken bone a seaman came running along the raised gangway that separated the benches and called down as he passed:

"Don't bother about that, sir. Hurry

up and get on the stern deck with the other passengers."

Paul, directing the man's companions how best to pull him into place, looked up and called back :

" What has happened ? Any danger ? " and the sailor shouted over his shoulder as he climbed the ladder to the fore deck :

" Don't know yet. Gone on a bank."

The rower, by this time disentangled and back on his bench, leant moaning over his broken wrist, which had swollen so rapidly that Paul could scarcely find the bracelet. Fortunately it was locked, not welded, on the arm. " I must get the key," he thought, and then suddenly it flashed across his mind that, although the ship had settled down so gently, the shock might have started some of her timbers. If the planks of the hull parted she would go to pieces, and the men on the benches, chained to their oars, would drown like rats in a trap. He jumped hastily on the nearest bench, and, steadying himself with a hand on the head of a rower here and there, for the tilt was considerable, leapt to the gangway. From here he could see the rows of rowers and beyond them the grey walls of the hold.

" Any water coming in ? " he called out to the men.

" Only a trickle or two," several voices answered.

" Where is the mate ? " Paul asked. The nearest man looked up sullenly (he was examining his bruises) and replied bitterly :

" Saving his own skin, I suppose."

" Isn't there a boatswain ? " Paul asked, and a more cheerful voice called out :

" Too small a ship for both, sir."

The trickle might be dangerous. In any case the broken wrist must be seen to. Somebody in authority must be found. Paul ran rapidly along the gangway, swung himself round the mast and climbed the ladder to the stern deck.

The mist hung over the river, lifting and falling. At one moment it closed in on the ship until not even the spars and sails could be seen, and then suddenly it cleared, disclosing a few yards of smooth oily river. The passengers, whom Paul had last seen camped all over the deck, each in the middle of the space hired for his baggage, now hung together in a group on the highest part of the tilted deck. One man leant over the rail, silently peering into the mist, another gazed up into the air to where the mast disappeared in fog, but the others

were all talking at the top of their voices. The jabber ceased for a moment when Paul stepped on deck and demanded :

" Where is the Master ? "

" Over there ! " a dozen men cried, pointing. One or two followed Paul as he picked his way down the slope amongst the neglected camps of baggage to where he had last seen the Master, in his bed, which was lashed to the starboard rail. The bed was empty now, and the Master hung over the poop rail shouting orders up into the mast. Behind him an old mariner and a butter-fingered passenger were untying the ropes which held a small boat, and every now and then the Master swung round on them and yelled, " Hurry up now. Unlace those cords," so startling them that they fumbled still more with the hard knots. A voice from the top of the mast shouted apologies out of the mist to the Master's questions.

" Can't see anything here. Too high up ! "

" Can you see the bulwarks ? "

" Sometimes ! But only the top of the rail."

It was evident that the Master was in no mood to attend to his passengers, and Paul turned to go back to the hold. He found himself facing a young man—even in his

preoccupation Paul noticed how handsome he was—who asked eagerly :

" Is something wrong ? Can I help ? "

" I want the mate," Paul said.

" He's gone to the prow to look to his tackle." The other passengers crowded forward to listen, and Paul explained :

" Some of the rowers are injured. One has a broken wrist. They ought to be released. If the water comes in they will all be drowned."

" Gentile dogs ! Let them drown," said an old man with a narrow beard and a high nose.

" He says one has a broken wrist," the young man said indignantly.

" That will knock something off his value. What use is a rower with a broken wrist ? " the old man retorted maliciously, and another man remonstrated :

" They will surely see to him and not let valuable property be destroyed ? He'll be none the worse when he mends. They are all strong young men down there. I'd put them at thirty shekels each."

" They'd fetch more than that in Rome," a third passenger put in. " The sums slaves reach there are astonishing. I've seen as much as a talent bidden, but I admit that the man was well educated."

"You'd think human beings had no value but in money," the young man said indignantly, and turning to Paul he added:

"I don't think they are in any danger. The mate will see to them when he has secured the ship. It belongs to a rich Greek, and the rowers are his also."

"Aye, aye! You may be sure they'll see to Gentile property before Jewish passengers," said the crabbed old man.

"Would you deny them their lives? The Master is a pagan, but he has more mercy than that!" the young man replied in disgust.

Paul nodded. He too felt that the Master was merciful. He had liked him at once when he came aboard at Joppa, and since then they had had two or three long talks.

"The fog may lift as suddenly as it came. They rowed too far to one side," the young man added.

"The river ought to be kept clear. What do we pay taxes for? Why don't they made a canal of it?" said an indignant voice, and the jabber began again, each passenger giving his experiences at the top of his voice. One man had made the voyage sixteen times and had never been

wrecked before; another had seen his ship go right on a rock which rose before them suddenly out of the depths of the sea where there had never been a rock before; a third had been wrecked off an Isle of Greece which loomed out of the mist, he said—a mist just like this. He had spent three weeks there half starved.

"I always travel by land if I can," said one voice.

"It takes so much longer and costs so much more," objected another.

The Master yelled an order to the man in the mast and the man in the mast yelled it on to someone at the bow. Paul heard the creak of a wheel floating back through the mist.

"Listen! They are winding down the bow anchor." One passenger instructed the others.

"Looks as if we should be here for days," grumbled the old man.

"If you are in such a hurry why didn't you take a row galley?" somebody asked sourly.

Suddenly a big bell boomed, and at once all round the ship bells began to toll. The big bell boomed close at hand and small bells tinkled on either side. The bells of the ship joined in, and the sound of the

ringing was like the mist, lifting and falling, now clear, now muffled.

"Other boats coming up the river," the young man said.

"There'll be a collision!" cried a passenger.

"No, no. They'll hear our bells," said another. There was a great splash at the bow.

"There goes the anchor," the instructing passenger announced, and the young man said to Paul with a smile:

"The mate will be here in a moment to let down this one. Till then there's nothing for it but patience."

Paul did not answer. He leant against the rail listening to the sounds that came out of the fog, strange sounds that seemed unnatural, like noises made by beings from another world, a world that was breaking in . . . taking advantage of men's extremity. The mist lifted for a moment and showed a blunt-nosed barge with a drooping sail that concealed the rowers, pushing inconsiderately past. The Master rushed to the bulwark and yelled:

"Send a barge back to pull us off and give us a tow to Antioch. We're stuck on this bank."

"All right!" a voice replied, and with a

jangle of bells the barge was swallowed up in the fog.

There was a yell from the rowers below.

"They've found a leakage," cried the old man.

The passengers rushed to the rail to see. But it was only the mate fussing along the alley way. "Coming! Coming! Must save the ship first," he called to the men as he climbed the stern ladder. Paul saw that he was the sailor who had spoken to him before and made a step forward. The mate seemed to divine what was in his mind, for he said indulgently:

"All right, sir. All right. Just let me get these anchors down first."

The passengers crowded round the windlass, ready to help, and Paul, seeing nothing for him to do there, climbed down the ladder and walked back along the alley way. He called aloud to the rower, who still crouched moaning over his broken wrist, that the mate was coming soon, and went back to his bed and the saddle-bags under the fore deck. In his present gloomy mood he preferred to be alone. He had not liked his fellow passengers when they came on board at Tyre, where the tall houses reminded him of his father's warehouse in Tarsus, and he liked them less now. They

were mostly rich Jews, who seemed from their talk to have picked up all the hard-heartedness of the worst Gentile traders. Antioch was full of them. They all supported the synagogue there, which was decorated with as much splendour as a heathen temple. It was a great city, the third in the Empire. The marsh land to the south made land travel difficult, and during the sailing season most of the traders from Judea reached Antioch by sea. To discuss with such people was like chewing sawdust. They imagined they knew everything about the Law, as if, without special study anyone could! The Greeks who attended the synagogues in Tarsus and in Antioch were more alive and interesting.

Paul shook up his bed and sat down. There was nothing for it but patience, as that pleasant young man had said. Why had he not noticed him before? "And why do I call him young when he is as old as I am? Why do I feel so old? Fortunatus was middle-aged, but I felt like his father!" Paul sighed as he settled again against his saddle-bags.

"For days I have done nothing but think. Fortunately we shall reach Antioch in a few hours," he said to himself.

Paul had often travelled by trading-ship

before, and he had known at Joppa when he saw the basket on the mast that the voyage would be slow. Even if there had been no basket the broad and heavy hull would have told him so. A good thing, too, as a lighter ship would have gone to pieces on that sandbank. Idleness was the worst part of a sea voyage. Unless there was an accident or a shipwreck there was nothing to do on a ship. If you travelled with a caravan there was always the morning's packing up and the evening's unpacking to superintend. There were small adventures to distract your mind and real danger in which you lost yourself outright. You had no time to feel tied up and cramped. Even the desolating sense of sin was blown away by activity. If he could walk or ride hard now this horrible depression would go.

It was not the familiar sense of sin that was troubling Paul. Neither was it his failure to convert Jannes and Fortunatus. He had often before failed to impress Gentiles. He did not expect to succeed every time. No. His misery, which had been growing ever since the ship cast off at Joppa to begin her slow crawl up the coast (they had passed the white Monument—Paul had pointed it out to the

Master), was something new and went deeper. It was a perplexity that bit into the soul, an uncertainty that inflamed and poisoned the mind.

Paul had said good-bye to Fortunatus and Jannes at Modin and travelled alone to Joppa. Just as well he had hurried on, for when he got to the harbour the Master had taken the omens and was about to cast off. The Greek had tried to delay Paul to see more sights. He had said that he wanted to explore the place where Andromeda, chained to a rock, had been exposed to the monster. He had suggested that they might find the very spot from which Perseus had rescued her. The skeleton of the sea monster, he told Paul, had long ago been secured and brought to Rome for exhibition. . . . A man incurably flippant, and yet Paul felt he loved him. Should he ever see him again? Fortunatus had been cordial in his hope that one day they would meet in Corinth. "How can I get to Corinth when my work lies round Tarsus and Antioch?" Paul thought impatiently. "Will it always be my fate to love people and long to be with them and be forced to leave them behind?" Deep in his soul he felt that he was trying to bury a question which would rise. Did he want to meet

either Fortunatus or Jannes again? What should he gain from another meeting but more humiliation and failure? For what had he to offer them? And if that meant that Judaism had nothing to offer that pagans could accept, what had become of his life's work? Was there no escape from that problem?

Another great splash in the river! That must be the stern anchor. The fog had lifted a little and Paul could see part of the low flat shore. As the sun rose higher and higher the mist would rise with it. It came from the marsh land on the south bank.

It would be better to face it and have done with it. What was the best way to state the problem? This fight between good and evil had been going on in the souls of men ever since the sin of Adam. God had made a clear bargain with Abraham, and he had given the Law to Moses. The gist of that bargain was that if the Jews kept the Law, rising by its means from the bad to the good and from the good to the holy, God would save them from death, which was the consequence of Adam's sin, and give them eternal life . . . that is, if He thought them worthy. What was wrong with this plan? Well, it was not certain for Jews, and it was very doubtful if it

applied to Gentiles. It had failed to convince either Jannes or Fortunatus, and yet a plan which came from God must carry conviction. Was the Law too hard for Jews and impossible for Gentiles? Did the Greeks reason too much and had he caught the trick from them? Doubt was vile, but what could you do when it leaked into your mind against your will?

"It is inspired by a devil. Tear it out, and pray, pray for strength to keep your mind closed," Paul told himself passionately. How could you hope to convince the Gentiles when inside Judaism itself every man interpreted the Law in his own fashion? Uneducated men like this fellow in Jerusalem, unable to grasp the legal obligations implied in God's bargain with Abraham or see the urgent need of unity to impress the Gentiles, were allowed to preach what they liked! The authorities ought to have stopped him long ago. Fortunatus would have accepted this teaching because Jesus was easy-going and pleasure-loving and taught a cheap salvation that allowed loose living. What a Gospel! Do as you please. Love, and God will save you without any effort of your own. As if it were not only too easy to love! As if men had to toil and

sweat on the road to damnation, easy and wide!

"What right has Jesus to say that struggle is useless?" Paul thought, and suddenly, like a flame, hatred for Jesus leapt into life so fierce and strong that he was startled. Was he always hating? Jannes first and now Jesus? But this was a righteous hatred. Jesus had no pity. He had misled the Greek, he was misleading thousands. He was too ignorant to see that unless men accepted and obeyed the Law they must all be lost for ever.

The mate, followed by the handsome young man, came running down the alley way, and Paul jumped to his feet (anything to get away from such thoughts) and lowered himself into the hold to help. By this time the injured man's arm was so swollen that the heavy bracelet on his wrist was bedded in the flesh, and when the mate unlocked it they had to bend back the metal and break the hinge to get it off. The rower yelped like a dog with the pain, but Paul and the young man held him down until the fetter was broken and the mate had pulled the bone straight and tied it to a splinter from a shattered oar. It was a rough but efficient splint, and when it was done the mate gave the man permission to

leave the rowing bench, and went off to examine the bruises of the other rowers and the state of their oars. The young man, seeing Paul prepare to return to his place, asked if he might come and sit with him, and Paul was glad to have his company. His conversation would pass the time and keep unwelcome thoughts at bay.

"Those merchants are still discussing the price of slaves. They think of nothing but property," he said, and Paul replied:

"They spend their lives getting it. If they didn't value it they would feel they had wasted them."

"Money doesn't bring happiness, but perhaps you have to have it before you understand that." It was evident the young man did not have to work for his living, and when they exchanged names Paul found that this was the case. His companion said his name was Joseph, and that he was of the tribe of Aaron and on his way back to his home in Cyprus. He had relatives in Jerusalem, and was a man of property. Like Paul, too, he was not a Judean. He had been born in Cyprus. Paul made him a place beside his own, and they were soon sitting comfortably with the saddle-bags at their

backs discussing their travels. As they talked, Paul's mind, tired by uncertainty and worn out by his search for a way of salvation for Gentiles, relaxed and his sudden hatred of Jesus dropped out of sight.

At sea they agreed, you were never out of danger. Land travel was safer but more fatiguing. How fast could a ship sail before the wind? Joseph had seen the big ships that carried the Imperial corn from Alexandria to Puteoli. With a great spread of sails and the wind behind them they went at an incredible pace. They carried oars, of course, but they seldom needed them.

"Shall we ever do away with oars?" Paul wondered. "It would leave more room for cargo, but it would be risky. A big ship is easily knocked to pieces. In a gale how could you keep her from running on the land or being blown out to sea? And if the wind falls? As things now are we can row."

"It's hard on the rowers," Joseph said. "This Master says he hates travelling by night, even when the sea is dead calm. Of course the rowers go to sleep. How can they help it, rowing day and night with no room for a relief gang? One bank of oars

fills all this hold, so what must it be in ships of war with seven banks ? "

" It saves time when you can sail all night," Paul said, and Joseph smiled.

" Are you always in a hurry ? " he asked, and Paul replied :

" I'm afraid I'm not patient."

" People with eyes like yours seldom are," the young man answered. " Your very eyebrows have hurry in them. As the Egyptians say, they're like the arms of the balance."

" I'm supposed to be like my father," Paul said, and in his mind a vision of his father rose clearly : the tall old man, much taller than his son, the two black brows that met above the big hooked nose, and the fiery eyes so ready to light up with rage—or was it fear ? " But at least I can control myself, and he doesn't try," Paul thought.

" I don't belong to a patient family," he said aloud.

" Well, you won't have long to wait now. Listen ! " Joseph said. Shouts of " Ahoy there ! Ahoy," came floating down the river. " It must be the towing barge. They've met it coming down the river."

The mate and the old mariner came running towards the bow. " Let's go and

see," Joseph said. The fog had quite gone, and when Paul and Joseph scrambled up to the fore deck the towing barge was coming down the river so straight at them that they could see both the painted eyes that watched at her prow and the gilded curve of the neck of the wooden bird above them. With a great shouting and bustle the barge came alongside. The ropes thrown by the mate were caught and tied, and the passengers were ordered to stand all on one side to help to steady the ship with their weight. Then with a shout the barge rowers gave way. The ship quivered and moved a little. The rowers gave another great pull, and suddenly she was off the bank and safe in deep water again.

"It must be sand. It's so easy to pull off," Joseph said.

In a few moments the sails were unfurled and the ship's rowers, in order on the benches, were pulling easily up the river.

It was very pleasant at the prow. If they stood at one side of the figure-head, a great bird that curved its neck above them and was meant, Joseph said, for a swan, they could see right up the river. Paul suggested that they should bring his baggage and sit there, and they did so. The

ship with a light breeze behind her sails went smoothly and easily. The rowers seemed to be pulling without strain, lightly dipping their oars in and out of the water. The flat land, covered with the soft green of spring crops and opening here and there into a canal, flew past, and time flew too. As the day wore on they decided to eat where they were, and so they drew water from the river in Paul's travelling-bottle for their ceremonious washing, and then sat and shared their food.

The breeze behind them blew the smell of the incense that the Master was burning before his deities at the stern, all over the deck. He took a pride in his ship, Paul thought, and was grateful for her preservation. The paint on the hull was fresh, all black and red and purple, and the wind that bellied the sails showed that they were painted in stripes to match. What a relief it was to talk to an educated Jew again . . . to have no need to strain your mind to grasp and then rebut an alien point of view, no necessity to adapt what you were trying to explain to a mind that understood none of your allusions. A Jew, too, who had had a similar experience of life amongst Gentiles . . . an experience which even the travelled Jews of Jerusalem never

quite understood. Paul turned impulsively to his companion and said :

" How pleasant it is to have a companion with one's own habits. I eat alone as a rule, for I try to carry out the Law even when we have indulgence. One easily grows careless."

Joseph, sniffing the incense, replied :

" Yes ! But I often wonder why we Jews, who only eat and lodge with one another, will travel on boats that sail under the ensigns of gods we have never heard of ! Here we are on a Greek ship, acquiescing in idolatry. Smell the incense ! "

Paul frowned. People had to travel, and there were no Jewish ships nowadays. Rules must be relaxed when you travelled, just as the Sabbath had had to be broken by the Maccabees. He was tired of asking questions. If you could break rules when you travelled, why keep them at all ? But that must be thought out another time.

Joseph evidently noticed the disturbance on Paul's face, for he said quickly :

" You don't want to talk about it ? Perhaps you think we fuss too much ? "

" We dishonour God if we don't. How can He dwell with us if the land is unholy ? " Paul answered. That meant that God

couldn't dwell in Tarsus? And yet He had made Tarsus. If Jehovah had created all mankind, why should one land only be holy? Paul frowned again and Joseph said:

"I am sure you are bothered about something. I noticed it the moment I came on board. Is it anything you could tell me about?"

Paul was touched by this sympathy. What honest clear eyes Joseph had! After all, why should he not share his burden with a fellow Jew? It might help to loosen it. So he told Joseph of his missionary work amongst the Gentiles, and of his attempt to save Fortunatus, and of the difficulties which the Greek had said he would have if he tried to carry out the Law in Corinth. He told, too, of Jannes' sneer about God's unfairness in commanding a man to obey the Law but giving him no guarantee that he would be saved if he did so. That surely was blasphemy, Paul said, and yet it had infected his mind so that he could not forget it.

Joseph listened with such interest that Paul liked him more and more, and was more and more grateful, too, for when he could tell his troubles it always helped to pull his mind straight. And then suddenly

he found himself in the thick of another discussion, for Joseph said :

" Does it ever strike you that perhaps we interpret the Law too literally ? " He went on before Paul could reply :

" How can anything from outside make a man unclean ? It is the things that come out of us that defile us . . . evil thoughts, lust, envy, lies, greed and silliness."

Paul looked keenly at his companion. Was that his own ? Was Joseph clever as well as honest ?

" But outward observances help us to check cruelty and lust," he said.

" Yes, unless we get lost in them and think they are more important than love and mercy. They make us hypocrites then," Joseph replied.

" But if we don't observe we'll be lost eternally," Paul remonstrated.

" Oh no, we won't ! " Joseph leant back and looked at Paul daringly. " Lost because we ask a few questions ! What nonsense ! What were we given our minds for ? " He clasped his hands round his knees and went on quickly, giving Paul no time to disagree.

" How can we help asking questions when the Law is full of contradictions ? Take the promises, for instance. We say

that Jehovah promised us Canaan, but we've not had it. Other races have always shared it, and now the Romans are taking it! Think of all the other promises that have never been carried out. God cannot lie, so of course He meant us to interpret them spiritually." He paused to take breath and Paul protested:

"Part of the Law may be allegorical, as Philo says, but it can't all be."

Joseph, full of his own ideas, waved this aside.

"I have not read Philo," he said, and went on:

"Haven't you noticed how each man looks at life from an angle of his own? I mean, we interpret the same thing in different ways? One Jew sees God as a Judge, and another, like Gamaliel, can only see Him as a Father, and yet God is both. Take the sacrifices. One passage of the Law commands us to sacrifice, while another tells us that God takes no delight in the blood of beasts. Which are we to follow? If God loves the beasts . . . and He made them . . . how can He rejoice when we torture them? Have you never noticed the fear in their eyes?"

"God was not thinking of the beasts, but of us!" Paul burst out and stopped

short, for it seemed as if the white marble tables piled with fat and entrails had risen before him. The priests were walking up the blood-stained causeway . . . he put out a hand to push them off. Like a drowning man struggling to rise to the surface, Paul made a great effort, and far off as if in a dream he heard Joseph's voice. What was he saying?

"The Essenes refuse to take life. Their gifts to the Temple are always incense."

The prow of the ship, so near at hand, glimmered through the red stains on the priests' clean linen robes. The Altar and the blood spilt on the white salt were fading. Paul heard again the song of the rowers, the plunk-plunk of the oars in the oar-holes, and his own voice, too, like the voice of another man who argued vehemently.

"But the Essenes are not allowed to attend the sacrifices. If we break one Law we break them all. What object is there in supporting the Temple unless we offer sacrifice there?"

"We could sacrifice incense as a symbol. All nations could join in that worship," Joseph answered enthusiastically.

"We've got to convert the Gentiles first," Paul said dryly. The world was normal again.

Joseph turned on him.

"Then you missionaries must state our religion in a way they can understand," he cried, and went on more calmly:

"Take our ideas about Messiah. When they talk so lightly in Jerusalem about a Deliverer don't we both know how futile such discussion is? Those Jews in Jerusalem have no idea how hard Augustus had to work to organise the Empire. What conception have they of the strength of the Romans? They only speak Aramaic, and think a Jewish Messiah could keep all these races united and rule the world. We know he could never be anything but a petty King."

"But if God decreed it . . ." Paul began doubtfully.

"You are not sure about Messiah yourself," Joseph interrupted imperiously, and Paul, surprised by his insight, acknowledged:

"Not a Messiah who would fight for power with the Romans, but if God sent a spiritual Deliverer to the nations without hope." He stopped short. Joseph had given him a quick look as if to see how far he could be trusted. Then he leant forward and laid a hand on Paul's knee.

"I think he has come," he said in a low voice.

"Who? The Deliverer? Why do you say that?" Paul cried, much startled.

For a moment Joseph did not reply. His eyes were fixed, looking up the river but seeing nothing, and he frowned as if with the effort to grasp his thoughts. The sails flapped lightly behind them, the plunk-plunk of the oars mingled with the song of the rowers. A faint dying whiff of incense came on the breeze. Paul waited puzzled, and at last Joseph said:

"If you knew a man who taught you something with every word he spoke . . . who could see right through all your masks into your very soul, and yet was never angry or impatient with you . . . who could heal the sick . . . if he had been here he would have mended that bone . . ." He turned suddenly on Paul. "It's no good lifting those eyebrows of yours. I tell you it is true!"

"A broken bone!" Paul said incredulously.

Joseph wavered, then with an effort he controlled his annoyance and admitted:

"I've never seen him mend a bone, but I saw him cast out a devil and heal a man with the palsy. But it is not the healing.

It is the man himself. He changes men's hearts and gives them new natures ! "

" Only God can do that," Paul protested.

" God uses agents. Messiah is His messenger," Joseph replied. His voice was kind and friendly again, and Paul, who had noticed how he had pulled himself together and controlled his anger, felt ashamed of his own heat.

" There have been so many Messiahs," he responded half reluctantly. " They all proclaimed that they were sent by God, and yet they came to nothing."

" If ever there was a messenger here is one," Joseph said emphatically. " The things he says must come from God. They stick in your mind. You can't forget them."

" That saying about uncleanness ? " Paul asked suddenly.

" Yes, he said that. He constantly says things that leap to the eye like that. Things of such insight that you know they are true."

" That saying seems to show that your Messiah has small use for the Law," Paul inferred coldly. How he hated these teachers and Messiahs who were always cropping up in Judea and Galilee.

" He wants us to use our minds," Joseph retorted. " He thinks we are too timid and that we bind burdens on our own backs and on the backs of others that God never meant us to carry."

" Then he teaches that we can pick and choose what we like from the Law? " Paul asked sharply.

Joseph frowned. Then, evidently looking for words carefully and thinking as he spoke, he explained :

" Perhaps it does mean some picking and choosing. He says he came to teach us to have more life, and to have that we must use our minds, must we not? He is very outspoken, and people don't always like it. They hate to be told they don't use their minds. But he is a good Jew."

Paul was silent. He would not encourage Joseph, who was obviously trying to justify his folly in swallowing such teaching whole. He was not a man, Paul saw, who would easily accept criticism, but, like most rich men, was accustomed to have his opinions treated with respect. This false Messiah was certainly not a good Jew.

" Take the Sabbath," Joseph went on. " He was going through a corn-field one Sabbath and some of his friends ate a few

ears of wheat. The Elders rebuked them, and he asked them if they thought that the Sabbath had been made for man or man for the Sabbath." Joseph paused a moment, but as Paul still said nothing he went on again. "Another time some Pharisees asked him to work a miracle to prove that his teaching came from God, and he laughed! 'You say you know the Law,' he said, 'and you profess to be able to foretell the weather by the signs you see in the sky, and yet you can't judge from the teaching itself whether it came from God or not.' They were very angry."

"I don't wonder," Paul said hastily.

"But you don't think many Pharisees use their minds, do you?" Joseph asked, astonished.

"We don't put aside revelation just because we don't like it," Paul replied angrily. Had Joseph not realised that he was a Pharisee? And how could you help using your mind unless God Himself kept it steady and saved you from the wickedness of doubt?

"But if the revelation is of spiritual Law we can carry that in our hearts," Joseph objected. "If we truly love God, what need is there for all these sacrifices and purifications? When a man is tied hard

and fast by ritual he has no time to be kind."

"Why doesn't your teacher abolish the Temple outright?" Paul asked ironically.

Joseph was taken aback for a moment. Then he said firmly:

"I told you that he is a good Jew and worships there himself! But he does say that if every stone of the Temple were thrown down we could still worship God in our hearts, for that all God asks is that we should love Him and show mercy."

Paul's mind gave a jump. Surely, he thought, that was an echo of something he had heard before?

"Then he would make an end of the Law?" he burst out fiercely, and, surely, he had said that also before?

"He says that we must learn to be laws to ourselves," Joseph retaliated quickly.

"You are speaking of Jesus," Paul cried with conviction.

"Yes. Did I not say so? You have seen him in Jerusalem? Is he not beautiful?" Joseph asked enthusiastically.

"I have never seen him," Paul said morosely. So Jesus was beautiful?

"If you had seen him you would know why he influences everybody. You have

heard of him, of course?" Joseph was too eager to notice Paul's gloom.

"Only too much!" Paul answered stiffly. How could a crooked man influence anybody? You must have beauty for that!

"You don't like him?" Joseph asked, astonished, and then, like a torrent, he went on impulsively:

"That is only because you don't know him. If you once heard him you'd understand. His teaching attracts everybody."

"So does sin," Paul retorted angrily. Of course he understood. The meaning was clear enough.

"Nobody names Jesus in the same breath as sin," Joseph declared indignantly.

"Indeed they do! Why, even the Gentiles in Jerusalem sneer at him for going with harlots!" Paul hit back hotly. Every trace of his former perplexity had vanished. He was too full of rage to feel depressed. Jesus the Messiah! What blasphemy! The Messiah a scorner of the Law who brought disunion amongst Jews and spoilt your life's work, a scoundrel responsible for the lost soul of Fortunatus, who would be responsible for Joseph too, now walking the same path to perdition.

"That's not true! He's not that sort of

man," Joseph exclaimed. "I mean he has friendships with harlots, but that's his courage."

"It's a courage that a good many men share," Paul said ironically, and Joseph, angry too, retorted:

"Jesus wants people to be real. He says that the ritual of the Pharisees is to wash the outside of the cup for show, and then drink out of the filthy inside. He hates hypocrites. Harlots are sinners, but they don't pose as righteous."

"What right has Jesus to say anyone is a hypocrite?" Paul demanded hotly. Joseph was of the tribe of Aaron, and the priests, of course, declared that the Pharisees, who hated their greed, were hypocrites.

"Every right if he is Messiah." Joseph spoke soberly, obviously contrite already because of his gibe.

"And if he isn't?" Paul inquired sharply.

"He is greater than we and knows more about God," Joseph replied, and then hastily and as if ashamed he added, "I am sorry I said that about hypocrites. I was wrong to sneer. Jesus would rebuke me if he knew."

Paul could not answer. His mind was in a whirl of resentment, and Joseph's

apology only made it worse. How could Jesus know more of God? Had he worked and prayed? Had he struggled daily and hourly for years denying himself to carry out the smallest enactments of the Law and so come by that knowledge? Suddenly Paul heard his own voice hard and clear saying:

"Jesus cannot be Messiah. Messiah is a Celestial Being destined to dominate the world! He must be triumphant, but everybody says that Jesus is to be killed for destroying the Law."

Joseph recoiled. Paul could feel his dismay.

"You cannot wish that!" he cried, and Paul replied, in a still harsher voice (how ready Joseph was to believe the worst of you!):

"The righteous rejoice when they see the vengeance of God."

Joseph looked at him with horror.

"I know such things are in the Law, but I thought decent men ignored them."

Then, as Paul met his reproachful look with a stubborn stare, he burst out as if he could not help it:

"How cruel you are!" and Paul saw something friendly that had been in his eyes sicken and withdraw.

" I am jealous for God's honour," he said haughtily but with a break in his voice. Why did he say such things ? Could Joseph not see how miserable and hopeless he was ?

" Jealous ? Yes. But for yourself, not for God," Joseph said hotly ; and Paul, bitterly wounded, jumped to his feet and turning aside leant over the ship's rail. The banks of the river, seen through the tears in his eyes, swayed and rocked, and far in the distance on that steep and craggy hill those towers and temples, a City in a mirage, rocked and swayed too. Would no one ever understand that his zeal was for God and not for himself ? There was a moment's silence. Then Joseph rose to his feet and standing beside Paul put a hand on his shoulder.

" Forgive me," he said.

Paul did not turn his head.

" I am not cruel. I am not cruel," he repeated passionately.

" It was my fault. I am too hasty," Joseph said humbly.

" I must defend the Law. What other hope have we ? " Paul said in a choked voice.

" Jesus does not attack the Law. He gives new and wise interpretations of it," Joseph said.

Paul did not answer. His eyes were fixed on the domes and towers of the mirage. They no longer swayed and rocked but stood up straight and steady. The more he heard of the teaching of Jesus the more dangerous he thought it.

"Real religion comes from the heart. Ritual may help us to keep it, but it can't give it to us," said Joseph. "I am not a hater of innovations. It is not our fault that we change. As we learn more and more, life chases us out of one idea after another."

"They are not our ideas, but the revelation of God," Paul interrupted.

"They are our ideas of God's revelation," Joseph insisted.

Paul shook his head and turned away. He would not listen any longer. Joseph was dangerous too. Instead of pulling your mind straight he tangled it more. The strip of river between the ship and those dream towers had narrowed, and suddenly Paul's mind cleared and he cried out:

"Why, it's Antioch. There is the river wall." It was a real, not a dream city!

"Of course it is Antioch. What did you think it was?" Joseph asked, staring at Paul.

Paul did not reply and Joseph said:

"I suppose we must part here? I wonder if we shall ever meet again?"

Paul met his eyes, such honest eyes with a question in them, and shook his head. Why should they meet again? Jesus would always stand between them. What a crowd of people had gathered on the wharf!

"Even if we did not agree, could we not talk without bitter words?" Joseph asked, and again Paul shook his head. What was the use? For the second time this renegade Jew had stolen a friend. Joseph was one of those people who could be deceived by any fable. Was he arrogant too, pressing his opinions upon other people?

"I must hold to the revelation of God," Paul replied. His eyes were on the quay. They were lifting the ropes to throw to the ship.

Joseph put out a hand.

"Let us meet when you come to Jerusalem," he suggested. "I want to see you again. But I am called Barnabas there," he added impulsively.

Paul looked round quickly.

"Son of exhortation?" he said and smiled. These Jews, these talking Jews. . . . But he might have loved Barnabas.

"I have not exhorted you to much purpose." Joseph smiled too. "But come to Jerusalem and I will bring you to Jesus. He will convince you."

"Never!" Paul retorted fiercely, and Joseph replied sadly:

"Don't harden your heart. I know Jesus, and you don't. If you heard it you would rush to spread his message."

"And abandon the Law? Not while I live!" Paul declared hotly.

There came shouts from the shore, the harsh order to unship oars, and bump, bump, this time against the wharf. And now to find a caravan going by way of the Syrian Gates to Tarsus.

VIII

It was a long walk from Upper Tarsus to the harbour town, and Paul on his way to his father's warehouse followed the course of the Cyndus, which rushed beside him clear and swift in its gravelly bed. The river was always rapid and cold, for its source in the Taurus mountains was not far distant, and just before entering Tarsus it flowed through a deep valley. In the middle of the city, close under the walls of the Gymnasium, it made a sharp bend to the east. Paul's mind ran on before him, showing him each step of the familiar way. You generally saw young Greeks bathing naked there, hardening themselves in the icy water, which was also supposed to be good for gout. Jews would not bathe naked. It was to display the image of God carelessly and without reverence, they said, but for himself, Paul reflected as he turned the corner of the Gymnasium, he had never felt this horror of nakedness. If there had been any bathers

now he would have stood to admire their slim well-trained bodies. But the river was empty. They were probably all inside in the lecture-room. The walls were too thick to let you hear a hum from voices within. Perhaps they were asleep. The afternoons were still hot, and there were not many people about in the streets. What did tradition say the students had once written on the walls of their Gymnasium? "For the young: action. For the middle aged: advice giving. For the old: flatulence." Clever, yes, but an Israelite would put it differently. How? For the young: sin that brought judgment. For the middle aged: sorrow that sought consolation. For the old? Well, in old age either hypocrisy was shown up or a man's hidden goodness came to light.

Beyond the Gymnasium Paul turned, with the river, abruptly south again. The Cyndus would run on now for about five miles and then lose itself in the muddy water of the lake. This lake, Rhegum, was the harbour of Tarsus. It was fed by springs and lay almost at sea-level, but saved from any inrush of the sea by the belt of sand-hills between. Light galleys were often brought up into the centre of Tarsus, but all the heavy ships discharged

their cargoes at Aulai, the harbour town which was built round three sides of the lake. Paul could already see it in his mind's eye. On the north and east and west were the docks and arsenal and warehouses, while on the south the river, no longer clear, flowed on sluggishly, straight through the dreary flat country to the sea. At some point or other of its course men were always at work dredging the channel, for without constant labour the Cyndus would not have been navigable, and without the river Tarsus could never have grown to its present size and prosperity. The muddy water of the lake reflected the brown and pink façades of the buildings and bent and distorted the oars and sails of the many-coloured galleys that came and went on its surface.

Paul pulled himself up with a jerk. His mind was watching the shipping on the lake when his body was only in the market-place of Tarsus. He had four or five more miles to walk.

Paul had been in Tarsus for two years, and they had been the most unhappy years of his life. He had spent the hot relaxing summers in his father's villa on the hills above the city and the winters in Tarsus itself. It was late summer now, and they

had just returned to the city. Paul had suddenly made up his mind to go back to Jerusalem. He felt he could not stand another winter in Tarsus. From Jerusalem he meant to go on to Arabia and there take up his missionary work again. At this moment he was on his way to complete the plans for his journey, and he longed to be gone. It was not that he hated Tarsus. He loved his native city and was proud of it, but as he walked rapidly through its streets everything he saw had some association with the past that kept his misery alive.

In former years when he had passed at each street corner as he was passing now the images of the gods of the town, he had glanced at them with contempt and perhaps a little pity. He had felt so certain then that it was in the mind of God to convert the Gentiles. Surely, in spite of the University, in spite of all its philosophers, Tarsus was turning to the worship of Jehovah? See how the Greeks had flocked to the synagogue and what a following he, Paul, had had! He had thought then—only three years ago—that soon all these images of silly little gods would be swept away. Even great Hermes (the straight, naked figure holding the golden wand

wreathed with snakes dominated the market-place), and Apollo too, with his leaping dogs and a trident outlined there against the portico of his own Temple, Paul had imagined had seen their day. And now? Did not the Greeks say that Apollo was the God of purifications and cured the sick? Then why did he carry a trident? The trident belonged to their sea god. What was his name? He was lame! What imagination had created a lame god? The Highest must be without blemish. They called him Crook-foot! But what did the name matter? The city was so full of gods that you could never remember them all. There near the wharf, where the light galleys tied up, was the decent Tarsian god himself in his long gown, with corn and grapes in his hands, symbols of his gifts to his citizens. Bread and wine: the commonest things in life and yet the gifts of the gods. What was *his* name? Baal, or Ahura-Mazda or Zeus . . . was he the same god under different names? How petty they were, these gods, great and small. The Supreme God could be called by no name. He was the All, the Father of the Universe, Jehovah. Strict Jews in Jerusalem refused to name the Name. But you must use some name

when you spoke of Him to the Greeks. If you didn't they mixed Him up with their false gods. Hermes the messenger intimated the will of Zeus to men, but what value had messages from Zeus, an adulterer loaded with vice? Apollo, the Greeks said, had taught them their rules for expiation of sin and cleansing of impurities, just as Moses had taught the Jews. You could never make the Jews in Jerusalem realise that every nation had these rules about sacrifice and observance of times and seasons and eating and drinking. Of course the special revelation that Jehovah had thundered from Zion had nothing in common with Greek imaginations. But there was no sympathy in Jerusalem for Jews who had to live amongst pagans.

How different cities were! Take Tarsus and Jerusalem. Tarsus was sunk in a hole. True, from the hills behind there were wonderful views over the snow-covered Taurus and even over the gulf as far as the mountains of Syria, and there was the river rushing down to the sea. But Tarsus was full of commerce and bustling money-makers, and the talk was always of games and trade and politics, while in Jerusalem men's minds ran on religion all the time and nothing was important but salvation.

In Jerusalem there was no water except what they caught in tanks and the little brooks that dried up in the hot season, but the golden Temple crowned the city and all paths led to it. From its heights you looked out over all the world. Perhaps in Jerusalem he should find peace again? But how could he? For Jews there tried to build a high wall between Judaism and the rest of the world, and it couldn't be done. If the other nations were to be saved there must be some link.

The blocks of stone pavement had given place to a soft road much worn with traffic. Paul had left Tarsus behind him. The road from here on to Aulai was dull. The river as it deepened ran more and more slowly, and there was nothing else of interest to look at. Paul walked faster than before. His bow legs, with resolution behind them, he prided himself, could outwalk most other men's. But he could not walk away from his mind. In spite of his will it went on worrying and turning over the same old problems.

This weight of gods must be lifted from mankind. Granted. But to throw over the Law, as those fools in Jerusalem were doing, was no solution. Even to widen it would not help, for if you loosened it too

much it would bind nobody. The solution was to preach the One True God and His message of one moral Law. Did Hermes carry messages from all the gods, or was he the Messenger of Zeus only, as Messiah was the Messenger of Jehovah? That pleasant young man Barnabas had been the first to say that Jesus was Messiah, and now other people were beginning to say it too. Every traveller who arrived from Jerusalem brought news of the success of the teaching of Jesus. How could any sane man think that this Jesus, who consorted with harlots, was a high spiritual being? For Messiah must be the highest of the string of ascending Beings, angels and archangels who rose one after the other to their end in God . . . and yet Barnabas and Fortunatus too. . . . Paul had loved them both. "All my misery started then," he said to himself. How could men admire this fanatic and his mad followers who were breaking the Law in pieces? They were destroying Judaism and with it salvation.

As Paul trudged stolidly on his feelings grew more and more bitter. He raged when he thought of the triumph of this bad influence and cursed his own inactivity, but what could he do? He wanted to fight the new development with all his soul, but

each time he was about to hurl himself on his enemies a paralysis fell on him, and like a dog on a chain he was pulled up by something that he could not control. How could a man fight with a weakness in his own soul? For something had happened inside Paul's mind. Before his last visit to Jerusalem he had been sure that he knew the purpose of God, and he had taught with absolute conviction what he saw so clearly. But now God no longer led. All Paul's old certainty had gone, and with it his hold over the Greeks. He still went on doggedly with his work. He read and explained in the synagogue, but the heart had gone out of him.

" Of course you become a sham if you go on urging people to believe teaching you know they can't accept. If you teach without conviction nobody listens," Paul thought.

Conviction came from moments of insight, times when, bursting with joy and energy, you were filled with a flame intelligent and vital that melted your own will and left but one road to follow, the road it pointed out. Surely that was God? But it had all gone now. Sometimes even the memory of those past days failed Paul and he asked himself in despair if he had

imagined it all. In the blackest of these moods he had even wondered if it could be possible, as Fortunatus had said, that there was no after life and that men wandered in darkness, unguided. But the idea roused such a repulsion that he pushed it from him passionately. Nothing would induce him to go into the darkness of that thought. There must be a leading. Somewhere if he sought with all his strength he would find a clue . . . a door would open. It was unthinkable that this life was all, that God the Creator took no interest in His creatures. Other men might be content to find their sole end in the satisfaction of bodily needs: other men dimly apprehending a larger life might grope half-heartedly through darkness towards it. But Paul knew that he was not like other men. He must be sure.

When he reached Aulai, Paul walked slowly down the quay, keeping as close to the edge as he could to avoid zigzagging in and out of the piles of merchandise that were stacked all along the length of the well-built stone wharf. Outside his father's warehouse he paused for a moment.

It was not with the Jews, as it was with the Romans, the sign of a low origin to engage in trade. Paul's ancestors had all

been merchants, and as he stood for a moment outside the great door where the crane rope hung down from the balcony above he thought how that scene had always been a part of his life. Across the lake outlined against the arsenal a light galley with gaily painted sails tacked to and fro, catching each puff of the soft breeze. Just in front of him the wharf was clear, and a crew of Africans with shiny black faces were beginning to unload bales from the hold of a heavy trading ship. It was a Tarsus ship. Paul saw the emblem of the city, an attacking lion with its teeth buried in the back of a stag, carved on the stern. It brought Damascus wool from the market of Tyre. He knew all about it.

A crew of pale-haired northerners with blue eyes were pulling a heavy galley into the next berth. Underneath their sunburnt arms Paul saw patches of whiter skin. Where had they come from? Some port on the External ocean far outside the Internal sea, away beyond the Pillars of Hercules? Or perhaps from Italy only? Did they worship still stranger gods than the Gentiles in those pagan countries, sacrificing to them with as futile and worthless hopes of salvation?

Paul, as he watched them warp the galley into its berth, suddenly remembered another day when, a very small boy, he had stood where he stood now watching another crew of black men unload another ship, lost in the interest of these foreign galleys that came up the river from the ports of every country in the world. His father inside the warehouse, discussing some venture with a Greek merchant, had told him to wait until he was ready to take him home. Soon Paul heard the Greek rise to go. Paul's father came with him to the door. Paul, too much afraid of his father to move, had ceased in his fear to hear the cries of the shipmen as they tossed the bales of wool on to the wharf and ceased to see the bales bob round and round on the hook of the crane as they were hoisted to the loft. He stood stock still while the two men talked, looking like a dog from one face to the other trying to piece together their fragments of meaningless speech, as if, like the dog, he could by sheer anxiety see through the mist in which grown-up human beings hid their meanings. Suddenly he heard the Greek say :

" Well. I will take the omens, and when I know to which hero or god we must sacrifice I will do it."

Paul, like the watching dog, felt his father stiffen and draw back.

"I cannot associate myself with that," he said.

"I forgot," the Greek apologised. "But you will sacrifice to Jehovah?"

Paul's father shook his head.

"Not for this purpose. Jehovah cannot be bribed. If we obey the Law our reward is sure."

The Greek half turned to glance behind him into the great warehouse piled with goods.

"You must have obeyed most excellently," he said.

"I have been greatly blessed," Paul's father replied formally, and for an instant his eyes rested on his crooked-legged son. The Greek shrugged his shoulders.

"Ah, well, a man cannot have everything," he said, and Paul felt the silence that fell was a rebuke to him. There was always that silence when any reference was made to his deformity.

As he stood now looking out over the crowded quay to the blue water of the lake Paul remembered how that small boy had shrivelled up, but he remembered too that on that day he had first felt his passion for the salvation of the Gentiles. For as they

rode back home Paul, crouched up on the mule in front of his father, had plucked up courage enough to ask :

" Father, what is a hero ? "

" A Gentile delusion. They say their great men are given immortal life and will help them if they sacrifice. They call them heroes."

Something was wrong with the bridle and his father was preoccupied.

" Have we no heroes ? " Paul inquired, and his father, still preoccupied, answered impatiently :

" Have I not told you there are no heroes ? We have Jehovah and the Prophets."

Paul was so much astonished that he forgot his fear of his father.

" Haven't the Gentiles got Jehovah too ? " It was unbelievable. The powerful Gentiles who had built the wharf and the arsenal, who dredged the river and owned the foreign galleys, without Jehovah ! His father was angry, and asked Paul if he forgot everything he was taught, and did he not know that the Jews were Jehovah's chosen people, and that no salvation had been promised to the Gentiles; but Paul, though his heart contracted at the cross voice, had to know more. Those nice

men with their shiny black faces and their broad grins were Gentiles; so were all other sailors from strange countries. His father, even when he was cross, knew everything. Of course Paul had learnt that somehow Jews were superior. It was evidently a terrible thing to have no salvation.

"What happens to Gentiles if they have no salvation?" he asked timidly.

"They perish everlastingly . . . that is . . . unless. . . ." His father had found what was wrong with the bridle and bent sideways to get at the mule's mouth. Paul hastily leant in the opposite direction to get out of the way. But he did not give up. When the bridle was adjusted and the mule had started again:

"Unless what?" he reminded his father, disregarding his frown.

"Unless they accept the Law." Paul did not let his father finish. He had never been able to take things coolly.

"But they must be saved," he burst out. "Jehovah must save them." After that . . . well, to be shaken on the mule was nothing, and the beating to drive presumption out of him that followed when they reached the villa was bad, but in the child's mind a greater fear had driven out the lesser, and Paul remembered that for days

he had gone on repeating, but not aloud, "Jehovah must be made to save them. He must. He must." He turned abruptly and went into the warehouse.

After the glare outside at first in the cool darkness of the great room Paul could distinguish nothing. Then, as he peered into the dusk he saw to his relief that his father was not alone, but sat at the far end of the warehouse deep in conversation with a man whose back was turned. At the sound of footsteps both men looked round and Paul recognised Gideon, an old family friend whom he had known all his life. He was so pleased to see him that he went forward with confidence, throwing off all the constraint that generally fell on him in his father's presence.

"Gideon never ties me into knots. Why can't I talk as easily to my father?" Paul thought as he greeted Gideon, who at once began to ask questions. What had Paul been doing? Was his health better? What was this new plan about Arabia? That was so like Gideon. He always wanted to know about other people first, and never seemed to think of his own life or interests. And yet he had only just returned from Jerusalem. One would expect him to want to talk of his own adventures. Paul loved

Gideon's candour and modesty. He had often noticed, too, that his father would put up with criticism from him that he would stand from no other man on earth; for Gideon, though so kind and gentle, could say quite sharp, shrewd things. There was an odd understanding between the two old men. Other relationships were crabbed and difficult to Paul's father, but that with Gideon seemed to come easy to him, and in spite of the differences in their characters they had been friends since boyhood. Some of the Tarsus Jews complained that Gideon took too much interest in Greek ideas, no doubt because he spoke Greek better than they did and knew something of Gentile history and customs. Gideon seldom spoke of these interests, except sometimes, to Paul's surprise, to his father, who lately had exerted himself and pulled many strings to get his old friend appointed to carry to Jerusalem the tithes and first-fruits collected in Tarsus for the Temple. Paul felt sure that he had done this to give Gideon the pleasure of travel and change, but even with such influence behind him, and Paul's father had great influence, Gideon would have to be careful. Beyond their business and the synagogue these local Jews knew nothing. A small

trader in his narrow life, tied to the wall like a spider, could see no significance in anything in the great world outside. Gideon might lose his job.

Even with Gideon, Paul could not discuss before his father his reasons for going to Arabia. Gideon, of course, understood at once, for he understood everything, and did not go further.

"You walked down?" he asked with that warmth of affection which Paul found so attractive. Though he was elderly and his eyebrows, almost lost under his turban, were grey, Gideon's dark eyes were as alive and clear as a child's. They reminded Paul of Gamaliel's.

"Yes, I walked," he replied, and added with a sudden irresponsible curiosity, for Gideon's understanding always made him forget his black moods and feel gay and happy:

"Tell me, Gideon, why does the Apollo in the market-place carry a trident?"

Gideon laughed, rather surprised, but he grasped at once the implications of the question.

"I suppose they wanted the god of medicine in their city, but as Tarsus is a port they felt the god of a seafaring people might borrow Poseidon's trident!"

Paul's father snorted. Since his son's arrival he had sat knitting and unknitting his heavy brows and impatiently drumming with his long fingers on his knees. Paul saw, as he knew he was meant to do, that in his pleasure at seeing Gideon he had forgotten the unwritten rule that initiation of conversation belonged to the head of the family. Those restless hands were so like his own, brown and capable, deeply cut in the circle between thumb and first finger. But, afraid of an outburst of rage before Gideon, Paul hastened to apologise :

" But I interrupted; you were talking of something important."

" I was telling him of the rows in Jerusalem," Gideon replied, and Paul's father added grimly :

" Your friend Jesus has been turning the place upside down."

Paul flushed. His father knew quite well that he thought Jesus vicious and a blasphemer. Paul had told him of his meeting with Barnabas, and they had discussed each new tale of the growth of his evil influence that was brought from Judea, but the old man was not above the pleasure of such jeers. He liked to rouse his son. Paul, on guard now, refused to be roused.

" No friend of mine," he answered coldly. " What has he done now? "

" Tried to make a revolution. Ask Gideon. He says they gave him a Triumph . . . as if he were an Emperor. In Jerusalem! "

Paul squatted down on a bale of carpets and looked inquiringly at Gideon.

" I didn't say that Jesus tried to make a revolution. I only told you his friends brought him to the Temple in a procession as if he were a great conqueror," Gideon remonstrated mildly.

" Did they put him on a white horse and give him a robe embroidered with sprigs of palm? " Paul's father asked ironically. He had once been in Rome.

" No, they strewed the palm branches before him and shouted, ' Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! ' " Gideon turned to Paul.

" You know the Court of the Gentiles? "

Paul nodded. It was nearly three years since he had walked through it with Gamaliel. He remembered the cages of doves and the clamour of the crowd, the soiled pavements, too, where terrified beasts trampled in their own dung.

" It's not an engaging approach to a great Temple, is it? " Gideon asked.

"It's disgraceful," Paul answered impatiently. "Gamaliel said it got more like a fair every year."

"Annas must make a pretty penny out of it," Paul's father speculated.

"There were more stalls than ever this year," Gideon went on. "You could scarcely get across the Court. That was what started the row. You see, at first, when Jesus began teaching the priests took no notice, for his followers were only a handful of fisher folk. But his influence has grown since then. And, apart from his teaching, many important people object to the state of the Temple and want reform. Of course the priests ought to have done it long ago."

"But this Jesus is a mischievous fellow, isn't he? How could he reform the Temple?" Paul's father asked. Paul could read his mind as easily as if he spoke his thoughts aloud. His dislike of the priests balanced his dislike of "innovators," just as his sense of duty went hand in hand with his love of property. It was undeniable that the booths were a public scandal, but in order to reform one thing you needn't reject everything!

"But it is what always happens. Great rebellions come because small reforms are

refused," Paul thought in despair. The first mention of Jesus had brought back his black mood. Should he never be rid of the fellow?

"Go on, Gideon. What happened next? Why did you stop?" Paul's father asked.

"I don't know. It moves me," Gideon replied. "I can't help feeling that a great mistake has been made. That day of the Triumph, when his followers brought Jesus into the Court of the Gentiles, they say he looked round at the money-changers and the animals and their filth and he said, 'God's House is a House for prayer, but this is a den of thieves!' Then, I was told . . . I didn't see it myself . . . he picked up a bunch of small cords and knotted them into a whip and went for the dealers. Most of the people must have been on his side, for they upset all the stalls and drove out the dealers and their beasts and cleaned the Court. They said he did it as if he were inspired, and afterwards they said that the Triumph had turned his head! But Jesus didn't look like a man whose head is easily turned." Gideon stopped again. It was evident to Paul that he felt a reluctant admiration for Jesus. Could it be that in his love for Greek things Gideon had grown slack about Jewish? Surely, even if he

admired foolhardiness, he could not agree with this last folly? Would Jesus take every friend he had from him?

"God's curse be on him!" Paul spoke his thought aloud.

"Oh, don't say that," Gideon answered quickly. "Wait till you hear more. It is all horrible. If you don't know what Jesus taught you can't see the . . . the . . . well, the irony of what happened. He was caught by his own teaching."

Paul's mind had jumped and grasped a new idea.

"Caught? Then they have silenced him?"

"They tried to," Gideon said sadly.

Paul's heart leapt with joy.

"How?" he asked eagerly.

Gideon looked at him curiously.

"Jesus has been crucified," he said slowly.

"Crucified?" Paul's mind staggered. Then Jesus was completely out of the way?

"Yes, he is dead," Gideon answered.

Dead! A weight of trouble seemed to roll from Paul's back.

"That ought to silence him," his father said meditatively.

"Don't be brutal," Gideon said sharply.

"Well, it generally does." The old man

smiled. Paul saw the glint of his beautiful white teeth.

"It hasn't this time," Gideon said curtly.

"Hasn't?" Paul and his father cried in one breath.

"Before I left Jerusalem people were saying Jesus had been seen again after his death. His followers say he has risen from the dead."

"They must be mad," Paul's father said angrily. "Nobody rises from the dead."

"I wonder?" Gideon replied thoughtfully. The spark in his clear eyes had died, and Paul, staring at him, jumped to a conclusion.

"When you saw Jesus, Gideon . . . like everybody else?"

Gideon understood at once.

"Yes, like everybody else, he impressed me strangely. His courage and his friendliness. His beauty, too. I saw him in that Triumph as he was going up outside the Temple. In a week he was dead."

"Why didn't they stone him?" Paul's father had been thinking on a track of his own.

"Pilate is very strict now. He allows no stonings. Annas took too many liberties," Gideon replied.

" But how did he get into the hands of the Romans? " The old man still pursued his train of thought.

" They say Caiphas arranged it. Annas doesn't do much publicly since the Romans deposed him, but in any case he is too old now. Caiphas has the power. Pilate speaks no Aramaic. It was easy to misrepresent the teaching."

" But what did you mean by your . . . what was it? That idea of your Greek friends . . . Nem . . . what do they call it? "

" Nemesis? I didn't say that, did I? " Gideon could not remember. " But that would not apply to Jesus. He had done nothing wrong that Nemesis should track him down."

" Nothing wrong? " Paul cried. " Don't you call it wrong to destroy our holy religion? "

Gideon looked at him.

" I don't think Jesus tried to destroy the Law. He spoke with an odd authority. Perhaps he knew a higher Law ! " he said.

" Nemesis wasn't the word. It was irony," Paul's father interrupted. He had dug at last to the bottom of his memory.

" Yes, it was irony." Gideon remembered the word he had used. Then he

went on, rather uncertainly, as if recalling his impressions and clearing his mind :

" Jesus didn't pull down, as the priests said, but he took an old idea like the Kingdom of Heaven and turned it into something nobody had ever thought of before. Caiphas twisted this teaching and said he was trying to destroy the Law. That was how they arrested him for blasphemy. Naturally, if such ideas gained ground there wouldn't be much living for the priests. Caiphas can't kill for blasphemy, but he could tell Pilate that Jesus wanted to establish a Kingdom. What does Pilate know of the writings of the prophets ? Of course, the Triumph was a godsend to Caiphas ! He told Pilate that the followers of Jesus were trying to make him King."

" There is no irony in that," Paul commented curtly.

" No, but there is in this," Gideon, sure of himself now, replied promptly. " Jesus taught that the laws of the Kingdom of Heaven are laws of the spiritual world. They must come first. They cannot be broken. I mean, of course, they can be broken and are every day, but they are not like the Laws of Moses, rules which every nation has and which change. If you break these eternal laws, he said, you are like a child

refusing food. You grow no more. Your soul dies. He was always teaching that if we want God's Kingdom to be established on earth we must never repay wrong with wrong, or evil by evil. Of course Caiphas saw when he caught him that if Jesus asked his followers to rescue him by force . . . and they could have done it . . . it would give the lie to all his teaching."

"But he used force to whip the dealers out of the Temple. That wasn't consistent," Paul declared hotly.

"The dealers had no right there," his father, always in opposition to his son, affirmed as hotly.

"I don't defend Jesus," Gideon said slowly. "He certainly took the law into his own hands. But no one could pray in peace. I was in the Temple soon afterwards, before they put up the stalls again. It was wonderful. The stillness awed me. When it was quiet you could see what a magnificent building it is . . . a house fit for Divinity. After all, it was what every sincere Jew longed for, the right to pray in silence. And Jesus didn't hurt the dealers."

"I don't like Caiphas either; but surely Jesus could have found a better way," Paul began.

Gideon smiled.

" Complained to the men who make their living out of the stalls ? "

Paul's father laughed aloud.

" Much use it would be complaining to Caiphas. He'd stick to his rights. I have never known him not take an eye for an eye. If Jesus interfered with his income he'd make him practise what he preached ! Trust Caiphas to see that he didn't swallow his spoken word."

" Oh, don't be so cruel ! Cruelty is awful," Gideon shuddered.

" I'm not cruel. It is true."

Paul wondered again at his father. He was cruel, but he allowed Gideon to say it to his face, and allowed him to go on rebuking him, for Gideon was more roused than Paul had ever seen him. He was roused against Paul, too, for he included him in the rebuke.

" You both sit there in safety and don't know that you are cruel. How could Jesus swallow his spoken word ? He never wanted to. Yes, Paul, you are cruel too. It is cruel to be so unsympathetic. You won't see where your hardness leads. But I saw Jesus die. It is an awful death."

Gideon turned his head away, but Paul had seen the trouble in his eyes. He did

not defend himself. He was too sorry for Gideon, who had looked on such horrors. Was he sorry for Jesus too? Never! What a man sowed he must reap.

"Is it worse than stoning?" Paul's father asked.

"Stoning is more merciful. The fall, or the first stone may kill," Gideon replied.

"Why didn't the fool escape? Surely he could have got safely away?" the old man said.

Paul noticed as he had often noticed before that though his father had accepted Gideon's rebuke without comment it didn't make him more sympathetic.

"The priests would have pursued him. It would have meant more bloodshed. The odd thing about the trial was that when Caiphas questioned Jesus he refused to answer. He didn't flinch. He just refused. Perhaps he saw that he was not to have a fair trial. People said they meant to kill him anyhow. His friends insist that he didn't want the priests to pile up their sin. They say he showed no resentment, because he had some queer idea that he had to die as a sacrifice to pay for our sins."

"Was he mad too?" Paul's father asked.

"No, quite sane," Gideon replied shortly.

Paul's momentary joy had long since vanished. Death was so final. Gideon, too, had been talking of something which had profoundly moved him, and Paul could not see his emotion and remain unmoved himself.

"Tell me the end," he said, and Gideon responded at once to the kindness in Paul's voice.

"When they took him to be crucified I followed. After they had nailed him to the cross there was a dreadful thunderstorm. It almost seemed that God was angry. When it cleared the sky was calm. Jesus went on praying all the time. I think he was comforting himself by saying the Psalms. I wasn't near enough to hear much. I heard him say, 'My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?' and then I only heard a word now and then. When he got to 'Into Thy hands I commit my spirit,' he died."

Gideon said no more, and Paul and his father sat silent too. And then, suddenly in Paul's mind one of his pictures formed, so clear and vivid that it was almost real. It was a caravan of Jewish pilgrims going up to the feasts. He saw the rocky road and the thick dust that here and there puffed into little clouds. They were ap-

proaching the Holy City. Everyone was on the look-out. All at once a man in front waved his arms, wildly, pointing, and there in the clouds, like a vision, were the Towers and the Golden Dome of the Temple. With a great burst of song the pilgrims broke into :

" Blessed are they who are undefiled in the way :
Who walk in the Law of the Lord."

Dusty and tired, Paul tramped with them, singing too.

" I will keep Thy ceremonies :
O forsake me not utterly.

With my whole heart have I sought Thee :
O let me not go wrong.

Open Thou my eyes :
Then will I see the wonderful things in Thy Law.
For I have chosen the way of truth."

Singing always, they climbed out of the valley, and singing still they trudged up the steep ascent to the Temple.

" I am a stranger upon earth :
O hide not Thy commandments from me.

My soul cleaveth to the dust :
O give me life according to Thy word.

I will run Thy way :
When Thou hast set my soul at liberty."

" There is no telling what will be the end." Gideon seemed to throw off a

depression as he rose. "Those followers of Jesus have lost all fear. The priests have to reckon now with this new doctrine of the resurrection of the dead."

"Based on a lie? Tut! That will soon die down." Paul's father rose too.

"Is it a lie? How do we know?" Gideon looked round for Paul, who rose and went with them to the door, the song of the pilgrims still in his ears.

"He that keepeth Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps.
The Lord Himself is our Keeper.

Jerusalem is built as a City that is at unity with itself:
Thither the tribes go up.

Our help standeth in the Name of the God who hath made heaven and earth."

Had Jesus loved these songs?

At the door of the warehouse the three men stood looking out. The sun, though still bright, was declining. The seamen had ceased work and sat on the half-deck eating their evening meal. The smell of onions floated across the deserted wharf, now piled with goods. Out on the lake a galley with gaily painted sails tacked to and fro. Was it the same ship still tacking? Paul wondered.

Gideon's eyes followed the galley for a moment and then wandered to the south,

where the Cyndus left the lake to crawl across the dreary plain to the sea. All at once he sighed and turned to his old friend.

" We are not so great as we think ourselves. Ah, well! we can always take refuge in the past. It was up that river she came in such style," he said.

Paul saw his father's look of astonishment and heard the bewilderment in his voice as he asked :

" Who? "

" Don't you remember? Cleopatra, of course. To meet Antony. She was a great queen! "

" She was a great harlot," Paul's father said grimly.

" That too," said Gideon, and the two old men smiled at each other.

IX

That year the sailing season closed earlier than usual. Before the summer was well over the winds began to blow up with such violence that the Master of the galley in which Paul wanted to sail to Cæsarea refused to leave Aulai. His ship had had a bad passage home. He could not skirt the coast as usual, but, driven by the east wind, had been forced into the open sea, and the galley was so warped and battered that he declared it would take two months to refit. Fortunately the journey to Antioch was easy and short, and now, at the beginning of autumn and the Jewish New Year there would be many caravans on the road, so Paul, who wanted to be in Jerusalem for the Feast of Lights, decided to make the journey by land. He agreed with his father that it would be cheaper to take his own mules. The keepers of the post-houses cheated you if they saw you at their mercy without beasts of your own, and there was always

the risk that the Imperial post might have pressed all available animals into its service and left the traveller without any means of continuing his journey. Also, if one hired horses one had to have ready money, and Paul never cared to carry anything of much value with him. He would take a few coins and letters from his father to their friends in Antioch and Jerusalem, and if by ill-luck the caravan was detained and the money he had was exhausted he could work for a few days at his trade and make enough for his daily bread. They were going by way of the old road which the enterprise of men who had lived centuries ago had cut across the Taurus and through the Cilician Gates to Tarsus. From Tarsus this road ran on through flat Cilicia towards Antioch. Every caravan they met would carry tents, and in the small coast towns along the Gulf of Issus and further south beyond Antioch on the sea roads of Galilee there would be sails of fishing-boats to repair, though these, of course, did not pay as well as the damaged tents of merchants in a hurry to catch their markets.

Paul refused to take a servant. The caravan with which he was to travel was small, but a part of it consisted of pack-

camels carrying his father's goods, and their owner, who had often before carried haircloth from the warehouse to Antioch, would see that his drivers looked after Paul's animals. One baggage mule would be enough. Paul's personal belongings were few and his tent small. He did not want a man to wait on him, and in case of attack one man would not be much defence. But since Pompey had put down the pirates at sea there were fewer brigands on land, and nowadays in the lowlands between Tarsus and the Syrian Gates there was not much fear of robbery. The garrisons of the Romans were set at intervals along the way, their forts commanded the passage of the rivers and their patrols tramped the roads. Robbers in Roman Asia had been driven across the Taurus, but those who had their headquarters in the caves in the hills of North Galilee were still active and dangerous. The road from Antioch to Jerusalem was long and for most of its length unsafe. The Herodians could never maintain that their Government equalled that of the Romans. For that part of the way it was wiser to join a large caravan armed for defence.

Paul's mind was still in confusion and misery, but the preparations for his journey

gave him no time to think. He saw, too, that there was nothing to be done until he reached Jerusalem, and that even there his attitude must be determined by the position which Gamaliel and the other leading Pharisees had taken up. By the time he got to Jerusalem, and he could not expect to travel, allowing for accidents and incidental delays, at more than the soldier's pace of one hundred and fifty stadia a day, this talk of the resurrection of Jesus, like most nine days' wonders, might have died down of itself. If it had not, well, then, all his weight of influence, not that that was much, but it might count, would be thrown on the side of coercion. Wicked lies of a false Messiah who had risen from the dead were blasphemy, and the authorities must deal with them accordingly. But until he got to Jerusalem, Paul told himself, it was only common sense to put the whole question out of his mind.

Gideon came to see him off. They had not much chance to talk, what with the hasty loading of the last camels and the control of restive and troublesome mules itching to be off. The traders were fussing too. Could men never get accustomed to travel? Must they always lose their heads?

But as Gideon embraced Paul in farewell he said a last word in his ear.

"Don't harden your heart, Paul. Remember God never shuts one door but He opens a hundred. If you want to understand you must ask of desire and not of reason."

What did he mean? Paul wondered as he rode out of Tarsus. Gideon took religion too emotionally. That was the Greek influence. Why would people think he was hard-hearted? If they only knew. . . . But he was not going to think of such things until he reached Jerusalem, and with a sigh of relief Paul turned his mind to his journey.

The caravan was not made up of many units, and the camel-owner acted as his own head man. He had about twenty camels laden with bales belonging to different merchants in Tarsus who had entrusted them to his charge. The three or four small traders with pack-mules who had joined it were of the poorer shopkeeping class, and seeing that Paul was an educated man of a rank above theirs they avoided his society. For once he did not try to break down their reserve. The men were not Jews: what had he to offer them? So for most of the way on

the flat and well-made road across the fertile and cultivated plain they rode in single file, Paul far ahead of the others.

The vintage was over, but in the Greek vineyards the masks of Bacchus still hung on the vines, the face of the god turning his blessing in every direction with the slightest breath of wind. Here and there bunches of grapes with their stalks twisted or cut had been left to dry for raisin wine. The long views over the plains to the Syrian mountains, the keen air, and the quiet of nights spent in the open soon restored Paul to a calmer, kindlier mind. From the prayer at dawn and the early start after the gathering of goods together, reloading pack-saddles and re-saddling reluctant beasts that got the caravan under weigh, to the camping at sunset when the earth, baked with heat during the day, cooled so rapidly that the tired camels stretched their hot necks along it seeking refreshment, each hour had its interest. Paul loved these journeys. He loved to ride alone day after day on some Imperial road, keeping his own track lest by changing he should discommode another rider, losing all sense of time and letting his intellect sleep. The long string of camels a little behind lumbered indifferently along

with their rocking gait and their sneering noses held high in the air, and sometimes for hours nothing broke the silence save the soft tread of their tramping feet or the cry of a driver to an unruly beast. As you passed one milestone after another you could note carved on the rough stone the growing figure that marked the distance from Rome and the lessening one that told you were nearing a town, and in the town the curious inhabitants would stop in the main street to stare as the caravan went by. There were momentary gossips, too, at fortified posts with Roman soldiers who lounged off duty and asked for news of the world, and once or twice a hasty gathering of the camels to one side of the road because the letter-carrier had been seen in the distance galloping towards Rome with the mails, important and strained, doing thirty miles a day and expecting all caravans to clear out of his way.

They passed Adana on the Saros and camped one night by the Pyramus, which rushed through the deep ravines of the Taurus with a noise like thunder, bringing down to the plain, it was said, as much soil as the Nile carried through Egypt. From the Pyramus their road ran over low

hills to the small town of Issus, a shelter for ships at the head of the Gulf, and from Issus they went due south through orchards and vineyards across the plain. They were now close to the frontier between Cilicia and Syria and only a short distance from Antioch. They would cross Mount Amanus by the pass called the Syrian Gates.

It was here that Paul's mind woke up again.

The caravan leader had settled that they must sleep that night by the mouth of the river Pinarus. There was a place where it emptied itself out of the marshy lagoon which he knew well, he said. He had often camped there before. He obstinately rejected several other possible camping grounds, and went on and on, and the sun was setting when they got to the Pinarus. Then the man suddenly realised how late it was. He had papers which he had orders to leave with a merchant near Issus. He had meant to inquire where he lived when they passed through the town, but he had forgotten all about it. Fortunately it was this side of the Gates, and no doubt he would easily find it. But there was no moon, and it might be pitch dark before he got back to Issus. So Paul

offered to see to the camping. The leader, relieved, but still obstinate about his site, pointed to the other side of the outlets of the river nearer the sea in the direction he wanted to camp, and started off to find his merchant, and Paul rode in front of the camels across the fords. When he dismounted to walk along the bank to the exact place indicated he saw, to his astonishment, for it was a lonely spot, that another caravan was there already and camped. It must have come from the east, for there had been no sign of it on the road ahead that day.

It was a disorderly caravan, badly organised. The men were hastily preparing their own meal, though the unfed camels lay around chewing the cud, and several unhappy horses and mules wandered up and down trying to graze on the dry stalks of last spring's weeds that lay here and there on the baked earth of the plain. Paul did not want to camp too close to such a gang, so he trudged on, leading his mule. He had to keep in touch with the Pinarus. It was too late to carry water any distance. He must find a place where the animals could be watered easily.

Some way down the bank as Paul followed the windings of the river towards

the sea, he met one of the drivers of the strange caravan, a dark-faced man in a torn haik and a dirty turban, who greeted him politely enough and went on in the direction of his camp. What had he been doing down by the sea? A little further on Paul came to a level piece of ground where a trodden-down break in the bank gave easy access to the river. In spring the cattle must feed somewhere near. He gave the order to halt, and stood leaning against the neck of his mule watching while the camels one after the other dropped to their knees and their drivers tilted the heavy pack-saddles off their backs. It was a familiar sight. Paul's eyes wandered over the wide space before him, to where, far off, the white fringe of waves broke on the strand. What was that speck away over there? Surely a little tent, light in colour like the sand, pitched on the edge of the marsh land within sound of the sea? Who could have camped in such a place?

Paul called one of the men to take his mule, and started off across the shore to find out. It was probably some straggler from the other caravan, and that driver had been to pitch his tent. The way was longer than it looked. When Paul got nearer he saw that a fire had been lit

almost in the mouth of the tent and that someone crouched down inside was blowing it up with his breath. The boom of the waves drowned the sound of footsteps, and Paul had been standing for a few moments watching before the fireblower became aware that he was not alone. The man jumped nervously when he saw a stranger and fell back on his heels and squatted there, staring at Paul across the now blazing fire.

He was a little man with a fuzzy beard and anxious eyes. He listened with a worried expression as Paul, raising his voice above the boom of the sea, shouted a greeting across the fire and explained that he proposed to camp near by. Was there any objection?

"It does not matter to me," he replied in Greek in a tired voice.

Paul's ears had grown accustomed to the noise of the sea. Against the background of its roar he heard the crackle of the flames. There was something wrong with the man. Would he thaw if they talked?

"It is easy to make fires in this country with so much wood about," he began. The stranger said that it was, and pushed the small logs of his fire close together.

He evidently had no heart for talk. Even then Paul lingered. The man seemed so small and desolate, alone on the dunes with the sea thundering behind him. But after one harassed look at Paul's face he took no more notice, but went back to his play with the fire, and Paul had to go.

"May your night be prosperous," he said politely and walked back to his own camp.

But later on, when Paul sat alone by the fire waiting for the caravan leader, his companions either in their tents or wrapped in blankets snoring near the blaze, the little man sidled up like a lost dog and asked if he might sit there too.

Paul said he would be glad of his company. Again he had that intuition of trouble. He had often noticed that people who at first rejected sympathy when they had had time for second thoughts came to seek it. He waited for the man to speak.

But at first the little man said nothing. He hunkered down close to the fire and hugged his knees with his arms. Paul sat silent too. The confidence, if there was to be one, must come of itself. Forced confession injured the soul. The fire which Paul tended from time to time was a glowing mass of ashes. The tents and

pack-saddles fencing them round seemed to hold back a tense and living darkness. A waking camel chewed the cud and made a small soft noise with its moving jaws. Now and then a sleeping animal stirred uneasily. There was no other sound but the run of the river whispering past and the far-off thud of the waves.

"It's getting on for winter. Arcturus ought to be rising soon," the little man said suddenly. He turned his head to search the sky, but the stars were dim and he found nothing.

Again that intuition of trouble, almost as sensible as a whiff of smoke, wafted across to Paul. But instead of telling it the little man all at once seemed to throw something from his shoulders, and as if determined to dash back into ordinary life and be like other men, plunged into conventional talk.

He began, as all travellers do, by asking where Paul came from and to what place he was going, and when Paul said Tarsus and Antioch and Jerusalem he nodded.

"So near, and so far. Are you on pilgrimage too? That is . . ." he stopped in an uneasy sort of way, as if he did not want to pursue that line of thought and jumped to something else.

"You are a native of Caria, are you not? I can tell from your accent," he said.

Even in the dark Paul flushed. He knew his Greek accent was harsh. But in the presence of that unknown trouble he could resent nothing, and he answered gently:

"I was born in Tarsus. I am a Jew."

"A Jew? Ah, yes. A Jew," the little man repeated. He did not seem to take it in. "I am from Armenia myself. I have come a long way."

His mind kept drifting away to his trouble, and Paul could feel with what effort he held it back and forced himself to go on talking. Would it hurt him too much to speak of it? Perhaps he had only come for the sympathy of companionship?

"One day we shall walk across that sea." The little man pointed with his thumb over his shoulder to the coast. "An Oracle has declared that the silt the Pyramus brings down will soon make a causeway as far as Cyprus."

"Surely the purge of the sea would cast it back again?" Paul objected, but the little man's attention had wandered again and he made no comment.

Masses of smoke-coloured clouds had formed in layers above the dark bulk of Mount Amanus, which circled the Gulf and on the Syrian side came close to the sea. The camels were all asleep now. Not a breath of wind stirred the soft darkness. The air held a stillness and a purity that impressed Paul and seemed to move the little man, for he edged nearer the fire and looked cautiously round and said in a low voice :

" I think Athena walks these hills as well as Artemis ! "

" I am a Jew," Paul repeated, but his voice was still kind. Any spirit might be abroad on such a night.

" Of course ! I forgot. You said so before. Jews have spread all over the earth. It is hard to find a place without them. Not that I want to. I know nothing against your tribe ! Antioch is full of them. In Antioch years ago I saw. . . ."

That memory seemed dangerous too. He dropped it and was silent.

Then suddenly he began to tell Paul of the battle fought between Darius the Persian and Alexander on that very plain, and of how Alexander had marched his men all along the sea-coast from Soli.

It was a confused tale. He jumped from one thing to another and Paul's attention wandered. Soli was the town in which Pompey had settled the reformed pirates. Alexander was far off, and the mention of Cyprus had reminded Paul of Barnabas. Curious that he had never forgotten him! Was Barnabas back on his property in Cyprus, or was he in Antioch? He was sure to believe every wild rumour about Jesus. He was one of those who might have to be silenced. As Jesus was silenced? Oh, no, not that way, but silenced somehow. If the followers of Jesus were carrying on his unholy work their mouths must be stopped. Even by death? Surely the death of a few was better than the destruction of all? But he had vowed that he would not think of that until he got to Jerusalem. Paul shook his mind free and turned to his companion.

The little man was talking to himself. That was bad for him. Paul broke in on his mutterings.

"What did you say you saw when you were in Antioch before?" he asked, and the little man jumped.

"I was only a boy," he replied. "It was an Embassy from the Indians to Augustus. The journey from India takes

so long that several of the Ambassadors died on the way. Porus was their King. A great King, master of six hundred other kings. They brought wonderful presents to Augustus and a letter written on a skin. One of the presents was a man born without arms. He died in Antioch." He pulled up again. What was there in that memory to hurt, Paul wondered. He must not allow the man's mind . . . or his own . . . to wander again.

"Was the journey too much for him too?" he asked, and the little man answered with a rush:

"Oh, no. He burnt himself to death because he wanted to live for ever."

Paul gave a startled exclamation, and the man added:

"They say that if you have courage to do that, you do!" Above the broad shadow which the firelight threw across his lips his anxious eyes were fixed on Paul's face.

"You mean if you sacrifice yourself?" Paul asked.

The little man nodded.

"I meant to do it to-night. If you hadn't come, I was going to wade into the sea and put an end to it."

"But God does not ask human sacrifice

now!" Paul cried, horrified. "Death is His right. He will never forgive if you take things into your own hands like that."

The little man shook his head.

"I don't care much about the gods. I never did." He hugged his knees tightly and went on with another rush. "That is, I used not to care." He leant towards Paul and said in a whisper. "I'm terrified now." He looked round at the dark wall of night that pressed upon them. "My wife did everything to placate them, but no matter what you do you offend them. No matter where you are they catch you. They lead you on until you take happiness for granted, and then smash! When you are not on the look-out they break it in pieces. I'm on my way to the Oracle at Comana now. We went there once. I didn't care. I went because she did. I haven't cut my hair or beard since I started. In Antioch I remembered about the Indian. But I'm a coward. I dare not burn myself. I thought they might accept drowning."

He put his head down on his knees and was silent. Paul looked at the bent head and the thin body. The man was too small to fight such misery.

" You must not think of drowning," he said vehemently.

The little man shook his head.

" I don't now. Somehow you have put that out of my mind. But when a plague from the gods first falls on you you want to appease them. You don't know what they will do next. I was afraid for her. I can't protect her now."

" Is it your wife? Where is she? " Paul asked, and the little man stared.

" Dead. Didn't I tell you? The house fell on her. I pulled her out from under the stones. Broken in pieces. Such a lot of dust. Her face . . . she was beautiful . . . lots of men think their wives are slaves, but I loved her. She was squashed flat. I can't forget it," his voice broke like a child's.

For a second Paul hesitated, groping wildly for that old certainty of the kindness of God. Without it what comfort was there for black misery? He failed to find it. He must do the best he could. . . .

" God is our Father . . ." he began.

" He's nothing of the kind ! " the little man interrupted fiercely. " He's a slave-driver. They are all slave-drivers."

" There is only one God," Paul said. He could not speak with his usual confidence.

" I wish there were none ! " There was a thin shriek of defiance in the little man's voice. Then, as if feeling he had gone too far, he explained :

" If there are no Gods we could rest. It would be all over then. I could sleep in peace. Even a slave expects sleep, but my dreams are awful. I'm afraid, yet I fly for refuge to the very gods who terrify me."

" Where are you going ? " Paul asked.

" To Comana in the mountains. I told you before. To the Temple."

A quick suspicion struck Paul.

" Will the priests want you to sacrifice yourself ? " he asked imperiously.

The little man shook his head.

" They don't offer human sacrifice. I told you I had given that up. Even if I had courage to burn myself I might not save her. How do I know ? It might only be two for them to torment. . . . Everything's so uncertain. At Castanbala there is a priestess who walks with naked feet on burning coal, but what help is that ? If that pleases the gods they must be cruel and bad."

" Jehovah is not cruel and bad," Paul cried with a sudden misgiving. It was a thought that sometimes came to him now

and he could not endure it. He must defend God from that reproach.

"I don't know about him. Ours ask our very vitals . . . and we are so feeble. I'd be ashamed to give so little if I had their power." He seemed as if he could not stand much more.

"God gave us life," Paul said hastily.

"What good is life if it was only to torture us?" the little man wailed. "I'd be content with only one god if he was a good one. If he would love us and help us instead of stripping us bare."

"Use your mind!" Paul retorted sharply. "If God is bad, where do our thoughts of His mercy and love come from?"

"Women, women!" shrieked the little man. "My wife was always making me celebrate the feast of some god or other. She put the ideas into my head. When I lived alone I never bothered."

"I live alone and I do nothing but bother," Paul replied.

The little man turned quickly to him.

"Is there an Oracle at Jerusalem?" he asked.

Paul shook his head.

"Then how do you Jews discover the will of your God?"

"By casting lots and by prayer," Paul said.

"Does he answer if you pray?"

Paul hesitated. In these past years he had striven with God, he had prayed day and night and with what result?

"There you see. You are not sure either," the little man said.

"I only know that God lives," Paul said. He must be honest.

The little man stared at Paul and Paul stared back again.

"Perhaps nothing else matters," Paul said in an uncertain voice. "I mean . . . if God lives."

At that his companion broke down altogether.

"If your god lives, shall we live also?" he cried. "I think of her with those dismal shades, alone in that ghastly country until I am mad with fear. Why can't I forget her? Is there any return from that place? Do the dead live again? Has no man risen from the grave?"

Paul opened his lips, and then, terrified, closed them again. What had he been about to say? That one man, Jesus, had been seen again after the death of his body? Was he mad, or was it the night?

"I only know that God lives," he

repeated grimly, holding on to the words as if they gave strength. It was an attempt at possession. He must strangle the thought.

The little man rose suddenly and came round the fire.

"You know," he said, standing before Paul like a child, "you frightened me at first. You look so fierce. I thought you wouldn't care. But you do. You've made me feel I must face this out. I don't much mind what happens to me, but I will go to Comana. Perhaps I can lose myself in the Mysteries. She did. When the ceremony begins and the god comes to each man I may forget my misery. But I won't be a coward."

Paul had forced his way back into ordinary life but he was too shaken to speak. The little man stood for a moment looking at him. Then he put a hand on Paul's shoulder.

"You *are* kind, you know. Isn't it odd how it comforts one? If it is all we have, it is still something!" he said in a choked voice, and then he cried and Paul cried too.

Afterwards he went away, leaving to Paul, like a whiff of fragrance on the air, a memory of his distracted kindly soul and an immense sadness.

X

That night Paul's short peace ended. He sat by the fire until the caravan leader returned, and then he went to his tent and lay in the dark, thinking. Had the spirit of Jesus been seen after his death? It was possible. Such things had been known. But if his spirit was still active, for what bad purpose had it come? To help his followers to finish his work? There was false as well as true inspiration. That voice, which had seemed to speak from the bottom of his soul, had been the voice of a demon. If you were not ceaselessly on the watch evil spirits possessed you! If you had courage to withstand them they had to fly.

Paul's mind turned back to Gideon. What had he meant? Had one door shut? Yes, that was true. Unless he could get back to his old position he could never again preach the Law. How could he offer hopes so broken to the men of Arabia? Gideon, and Gamaliel too, were odd. They

both saw things in you before you were aware of them yourself. Gamaliel had known that Paul felt the Law oppressive, and that was true (but only for Gentiles), and Gideon said that a door had shut, and that was true also. But where were the hundred doors that were to open? Death was the most real thing in the world. When it came into your life you could not turn away. There was no escape. Gideon had said, ask of desire. What could men desire more than to be given life again? To live not in weary bloodless monotony, but strong and able to take active interest again, more alive than in the life of the body. That poor little man had been broken by death. He must talk to him again in the morning. He would not advise him, as most people would do, to begin again. No. It was impossible to take up your old life as before when death had broken it. You must go on and face the loneliness. Then . . . perhaps . . . you would find a reason. Was that so with everything in life? Were there a hundred doors . . . if you asked of desire?

Towards dawn Paul slept, and when he woke the little man had gone. Paul never knew his race or his occupation, but all that day he carried with him a memory of

despair, and all day long his thoughts were full of death. He had always hated death. When he was a boy in Tarsus if he saw outside a door the vase which held the purifying water for those who had had to do with the dead, he would always avoid that street until he was sure that the funeral was over. Once returning home late at night with his tutor they had heard the sound of the melancholy flutes and had actually seen the women at the head of the funeral procession turn into the road. He remembered how he had pulled his hand away from his tutor's hold and fled in terror lest he should have to pass a shrouded corpse. That was a long time ago, but even now, after all these years, Paul sometimes saw his mother's dead body again. She lay on her couch cold and stiff, her eyeballs sunk in her head, her dark lashes on her cheeks, and the skin stretched tight over the sharpened bone of her nose. What good to call aloud? There was no one there to hear. Something was lost or gone. And Death, the destroyer of delights as the Arabians said, the punishment for sin as the Hebrew prophets declared, lay in waiting for everyone. There could be no joy in life until sin and death were done away with.

Paul rode along, scarcely seeing where he was going, only half aware of the marsh near which the little man had camped or the castle on the mound beyond. They passed through Baiæ, with its baths and houses and towers that ran from the hills to the sea, and it was only when he saw the white marble portico called the Syrian Gates blocking the road that he realised they had reached the frontier. Here they were detained for some time, lounging under the marble pillars. The Centurion was in no hurry to finish his meal, and when at last he came to examine their papers and give them leave to pass through a gale was blowing from the mountains, and they had hard work to get to the suburbs of Alexandretta. They put up at an inn, and next day they crossed the pass cut deep in the rock of the Amanus and sometimes called, like the frontier station, the Syrian Gates.

They were now close to Antioch. The chain of the mountains of Lebanon, which runs north, and that of Taurus, which runs east, meet abruptly here, and the Orontes breaks through at their meeting-place. Antioch was built at a bend of the river, part of it on the level left bank, part on an island, and part on the crags of Mount

Silpius. Paul knew the city well. Each of its four hills was enclosed in a wall of its own, and one great wall surrounded them all. Mountains and rivers and cities were all, Paul felt, less real than death and sin, but nevertheless while one lived in the body one had to deal with such things. He had slept better the night before, and now he was able to force his mind back to deal with practical affairs.

He did not mean to ask hospitality of any of his father's friends. They would press him to stay in Antioch over the Sabbath, and if the accursed thing had reached the city there would be discussion in the synagogue in which he did not want to join. That obscure feeling still held him back from debate. He must wait until he got to Jerusalem and could consult with Gamaliel. So he would stay at an inn and be off as soon as he could.

The leader of the caravan readily agreed to send Paul's baggage to his inn and to care for his mules until he had found a caravan going to Jerusalem. It was too early in the year for pilgrim caravans, and in any case it was wiser to go with a body of merchants capable of defence. The bands of robbers on the edge of the desert in North Galilee were near enough to civilisation to

raid it, and, disguised as pilgrims or traders or even as soldiers, they pillaged country houses and villages and robbed unarmed caravans. You had to be on the watch all the time.

It took Paul only a few hours after his arrival in Antioch to find that just such a caravan as he wanted would leave for Jerusalem in two days. He at once arranged to travel with it. This early departure left but one day's freedom, and he spent that in visiting several of his father's old friends. They were loud in their disappointment at seeing so little of him, and to each of them he had to promise a longer visit on his return. He said good-bye, glad that there had been no time for any but personal talk.

But Paul was not to leave Antioch without discussion. That evening he found himself with nothing to do. His visits were paid, his baggage was ready and all his arrangements made for the start early next morning. So, to pass the hours before bedtime, he went out to walk about the city.

The streets blazed with artificial light and were crowded with people. After the silence and darkness of nights spent in the open the noise and glare were confusing.

Paul walked slowly along the wide open space which Herod had cleared of filth and paved with white marble blocks. It was a magnificent street. The Cloisters on either side were supported on rows of white marble pillars as splendid as those in the Temple at Jerusalem. Herod had been a great builder. Paul crossed the street to the Colonnade on the opposite side. He remembered that there were marble seats placed at intervals along the wall where the citizens sat to rest or watch the crowd. Herod had thought of everything. Paul found an empty seat and sat down. The broad street before him stretched the whole length of the city, and on its polished pavement men, women, and children, of every nation on earth, it seemed, were walking up and down in little groups, chattering and laughing with one another. He was the only solitary one there.

In the bustle of the day all thoughts of death had been driven from Paul's mind, and now a heavy depression rushed in and took their place. He had never in his life felt more lonely.

In these Gentile cities there were always things going on in which no Jew could share. All his life Paul had known of feasts to which he could not go and of

Games at which he could only look on . . . there was his deformity as well as his religion. His father had always resented him, his mother was dead, and his sister married. Paul felt that he belonged to no place, and there was no one to whom he belonged.

Two priests of Isis in leopard skins passed quickly on their way to the Temple beyond. How high up their ears looked, set in those shaven heads! Curious that the Egyptians shaved their heads, as did the Jews when they were under vows, and that little man had allowed his to grow. . . . The worship of Isis was spreading. What a heathen city Antioch was, and yet Jews formed a large part of the population. But in spite of their money and social importance they were outside the city life here, as they were in Tarsus. They would take no part in the Festivals. They had once shared in the Games, but they had given that up. Herod had re-started the Olympic Games in Antioch, and the citizens in gratitude for his generosity had made him a perpetual Manager . . . cheap generosity with money taken from his over-driven subjects. When the Jews had taken part in the Games the Greeks had laughed at them because of their horror of nakedness and their

circumcision. . . . But the Egyptians practised circumcision too! In Alexandria the Games were gorgeous. Did the Romans laugh at circumcised Egyptians? The real reason why the Jews were out of everything was their fear that at any moment if they shared the life of Gentiles they might be called upon to sacrifice to some false god. The worshippers of Isis were not so particular.

A small group of people paused under the pillars of the Colonnade close by to greet a friend. Paul heard the shrill giggle of a woman and the deeper voices of men and looked round. He glanced at the men and did not like the look of them. Bold and cunning and fat with too much good living, he thought. Then his eyes fell on the woman. She was bare-headed, her hair elaborately dressed in rows and rows of small tight curls. Her eyelids were darkened and her eyebrows covered with paint. Her face, painted too, glowed with colour. Chains of precious stones shone on her neck, and her bare arms were half hidden in gold armlets. Her gown was loosely girdled, and stiff with embroidery.

"A harlot!" Paul thought. The very look of her filled him with horror. Though there were many of her sort in Tarsus they

were not so richly dressed, and after the modest dress of his father's women servants and the rough clothing of the women working in the fields whom he had so often seen lately she was an abominable sight! It was a shame to see such in public roads.

The chattering group moved on again. Paul watched them harshly. The woman rolled her eyes about her and walked with an odd mincing gait, rising on her toes. How puffed-up with insolence she was. She walked like that to make herself look taller. Her gay clothes almost touched Paul's knee as she passed, and the perfume that saturated them filled the air and sickened him. She and her companions had forgotten death. They built their palaces and sat down to enjoy their lust, and lo! at their shoulders was Death, and what was left to them?

At that moment Barnabas came out from the crowd and walked towards Paul down the Colonnade. At the sight of someone he knew . . . a clean-living Jew . . . Paul's whole face lit up and he called aloud to attract his attention. Barnabas recognised him at once and came rapidly forward and sat down beside him.

"It is good to see you again," he said, and put a hand affectionately on Paul's

knee. He seemed very happy, and was evidently as pleased to see Paul as Paul was to see him.

Death and the harlot vanished from Paul's mind. In answer to the eager questions of Barnabas he told where he was going and where he had spent the years since they had met. He poured it all out impulsively, and then, ashamed of such an outburst, pulled himself up.

"Are you on your way to your property in Cyprus?" he asked Barnabas. It was his turn to talk.

"I have no property now," Barnabas replied.

Paul stared and Barnabas laughed.

"I have given it all up," he added gaily.

"Given it up?" Paul repeated.

"Yes. A number of us have done it for our poorer friends in Jerusalem. We have everything in common now."

At that a shadow fell on Paul's face.

"Did Jesus preach that?" he asked, in opposition at once.

"No, not exactly." Barnabas reflected. "But he said that if we saw our brother in want and refused to help him we could not keep the love of God in our hearts. So of course we share."

"His followers are mostly poor, are they

not? I suppose they all live at their ease now?" Paul asked.

"None of us do that. We have to spread the good news," Barnabas said good-temperedly, ignoring the implication.

"What good news? That Jesus is dead?" Paul asked unpleasantly, and Barnabas, curbing himself, answered:

"Surely you know that he has been seen after his death?"

"Have you seen him yourself?" Paul demanded and Barnabas hesitated.

"Peter has seen him, and James and his brothers," he said.

"They may have imagined it," Paul suggested harshly.

Barnabas shook his head.

"Oh no! There is no doubt that Jesus has been raised from the dead."

"By the power of an evil spirit?" Paul cried.

"Tut! Everybody knows that evil spirits have no power to raise the dead! By God," Barnabas said firmly.

"Why should God raise Jesus?" Paul asked.

"Because he is Messiah. I told you so before. God wanted to show us that we live after death, so He gave Jesus a body, and he died and lives again."

" God send Messiah to die defiled ! It is profanity. Where are we told in the Law of a crucified Messiah ? " Paul choked.

" ' Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. He was wounded for our transgression . . . bruised for our iniquities.' " Barnabas quoted, and Paul, stung by his readiness, replied angrily :

" Was that where Jesus got his crazy idea of sacrificing himself ? Did he expect God to profane the Sanctuary by accepting his defiled body instead of the sacrifices of Moses ? "

" How could the cruel way they treated his body affect his soul ? " Barnabas cried. " And Jesus was a sacrifice, for he died to show us the way to live. The sacrifices of Moses are only symbols of repentance and forgiveness. Jesus made no break with the Law. He enlarged it and put new life into it. You and I have carried out the Law all our lives, and we know that it is not enough. Yes, Paul. You know it. Observance has not brought you happiness."

" That is my fault, and not the fault of the Holy Law. This new teaching thrusts us back into chaos," Paul said fiercely. He hated the calm with which Barnabas spread restlessness and misery in other men's souls.

"What is it but chaos now? Do we acknowledge any law but force?" Barnabas was roused too.

"Jesus used force when he drove the dealers out of the Temple," Paul said sharply. Truly he had not known Barnabas before. He was getting the taste of his character now.

"He saw that money-making was eating into our very souls," Barnabas insisted. "The Temple is full of it. You know that the priests refuse to take any money but Hebrew because they get their percentage on the exchange from the money-changers. The other traders pay for the right to sell the sacrifices. And we all acquiesced in it. Jesus was the only one who had the courage to act. He saw that soon no one would be able to worship there. We couldn't withstand that atmosphere!"

"Atmosphere?" Paul asked. How Barnabas hammered at facts that everybody knew. It was not the way to convince. It made you a bore.

"Jesus called it leaven." Barnabas spoke more quietly. "He warned us to beware of it."

"What did he mean?" Paul asked. Had Barnabas seen his thoughts? Why was he looking at him in that half-frowning,

half-kindly way? Had he hurt him? He might have loved Barnabas.

But if Barnabas was hurt he didn't show it.

"Jesus said it was the things we take for granted," he went on. "I can't explain it as he did, but don't you understand what I mean? Don't you know how hard it is to go your own way when you live with people who think you will do as they do? Even if you know they are wrong it takes courage to act differently. It runs through everything, and you don't see that you are permeated until you meet someone who is free. We all took the greed of the priests for granted and it hid God from us. And the priests and the Temple are there to bring Him near. But what good is it to talk? You know how worldly they are and how they poison us all, but you have that leaven in you too. You take things for granted."

"God is my witness that I do nothing of the kind," Paul protested vehemently.

"We all take brutality and hard-heartedness for granted. Look at that now!" Barnabas seized Paul by the elbow and pointed to two men who were shoving through the crowd, driving a captive before them. Paul shook his arm free.

" It's only a slave. What has he done? " he said, astonished at Barnabas' excitement. The man's legs were fettered so that he walked with difficulty. Over his shoulders he carried a heavy fork of wood. His hands were tied to its prongs on his breast.

" Only a slave! " Barnabas cried passionately. " Only a man stolen from his family and punished because he fought for freedom! They must have just landed a cargo. He's new to it all. Look at his feet."

Paul saw that the chalk that whitened the slave's feet had not yet been walked off, and his newly bored ears were still bleeding. His eyes were sunk in his head, either from fatigue or misery. The two men pushed their way on with the slave through the indifferent people and were lost in the throng. For a moment or two Paul heard the clink of the fetters, and then it ceased.

" That's what we make of life," Barnabas cried. " We live on the backs of slaves. ' Is he respectable? How many slaves does he keep? ' men ask. If you haven't more than ten you are not much thought of."

" But what do you want? " Paul asked, incensed at the unreason of Barnabas.

" The Law forbids such cruelties to Jews. It is the best we know, and you and Jesus want to put an end to it."

" That's not true," Barnabas replied hotly. " Jesus would have ended no good thing. He wanted us to make a different world, a world without slaves, where money would not buy everything, where force would be at the disposal of the weak and not the strong, where Judges would not take bribes and would protect the accused."

" You will never get that ! " Paul cried. Barnabas was sweeping him away.

" Never. Unless we make it for ourselves. Jesus said we could. God sent him to make the world ready for His Kingdom."

Paul made a great effort to take possession of his soul again. The things that Barnabas said of the world were true. It was wicked and cruel. But the Law was not cruel.

The crowd in front thinned, and in the space left the harlot and her friends came back down the middle of the street, in full view of everybody. The small groups of decent citizens ceased chattering and stood silent, staring at her. She looked about her boldly and giggled affectedly, fawning on the fat man who walked beside her.

Paul saw that she was enjoying her publicity. A breath of that sickening perfume floated across to the Colonnade.

Paul turned to Barnabas and demanded indignantly :

" Could Jesus be divine and still love that ? "

Barnabas had been watching her too.

" Perhaps only the Divine could love her," he answered soberly.

" Messiah consort with shameless women ! Every prophet has denounced her ! " Paul said savagely.

" Jesus was more than a prophet. She's a temptation to us. She was none to him," Barnabas replied. His eyes followed the harlot and her companions as they passed down the street.

" Could you love her ? " Paul asked angrily.

Barnabas shook his head.

" I'm not big enough. She is still a danger to me."

" She's a danger to us all," Paul said morosely, and Barnabas speculated :

" Perhaps Jesus could forgive her because he remembered divine beauty. Before God sent him to earth he knew only the good. Perhaps he could see her soul buried in her body. It may have grace."

Paul stared.

"Have you become a Greek to believe in inspiration through whores, and that Zeus sends smaller gods to walk the world?"

"Why should I become a Greek to believe that God rules the earth? We have always believed in the coming of Messiah. Jesus knew of a higher life and higher laws of behaviour than we do."

"Being friends with the wicked?" Paul interrupted ironically.

"Yes." Barnabas accepted it. "I don't say that I understand it all. It is a mystery. He told us that God loves even the worthless and the bad."

"We killed him for it!" Paul interrupted again.

"Yes" . . . Barnabas accepted that too . . . "we killed him for it. It was our ignorance. When he said that just as God makes His sun to rise on the evil as well as the good, so He loves His creatures bad and good, how could we understand?"

Barnabas stopped. Paul could see that he was puzzled, and waited until he went on again.

"Jesus certainly taught that the only way to make men incapable of cruelty is to change their hearts, and the only way to do that is to love them. What man could

have imagined such teaching? I tell you I don't always understand it myself. You need a new heart for that. But I knew Jesus. . . ."

"So you take it on trust?" Paul said.

"I take it on trust," Barnabas repeated.

"It sounds nonsense to me," Paul said, controlling his temper with an effort.

"I told you you need a new mind to understand it," Barnabas replied.

He looked at Paul for a moment and added:

"To tear a man out of his old life into this life of the spirit is no easy birth! It will be agony to you when it comes."

"It will never come to me! Are you not ashamed to talk such nonsense?" Paul cried. "In one breath you say that God loves the vilest creatures, and in the next you say that it means agony to be born into such knowledge. Of course it would be agony to give up the Law. I wonder that you are not afraid of God raising up a vindicator. . . ."

"You?" Barnabas interrupted.

"Better me than no one," Paul said gloomily.

Barnabas lent forward and said earnestly:

"Denounce us if you will. You will

find you can't shake us. I should not even hate you for it, for if Jesus lives again we shall live also."

"I will never forgive him," Paul cried.

"No," Barnabas said calmly. "You cannot forgive because you have thought too much evil of him. But it is yourself, not Jesus, whom you cannot pardon. . . . If I could make you see. . . . But how can one explain sight to the blind?" Barnabas seemed to give it up.

"It was leaven a moment ago. I'm blind now, am I?" Paul asked.

"Yes! It was leaven, and you are blind," Barnabas replied.

"And this new knowledge is sight?" Paul asked, lifting his brows.

"Yes; and I can't explain!" Barnabas said hopelessly.

"And you are called son of exhortation? Knowledge that can't be explained is not much use to anybody," Paul said. He could not help being nasty.

Barnabas turned suddenly to him.

"Suppose it were true?" he cried.

"Suppose what were true?" Paul replied obstinately. He wasn't going to make it easier for Barnabas.

"Suppose it were all true! Suppose that God loves us, good and bad. Suppose

that He saw we were making muddles here and a hideous life. Suppose He sent a Great Spirit, very near and dear to Him . . . for to show love even God must pay . . . suppose He sent Jesus to tell us how to live. Can't you see that if we live after death all this is possible?"

Barnabas' beautiful eyes shone with excitement as if the thought lit up his mind. He had honest eyes too; Paul had seen that before. But he shook his head.

"It's too muddle-headed for me," he replied. "God gave us the Law."

Barnabas suddenly clapped his hands together as if in despair.

"It is my fault," he cried. "Why am I so stupid? I have told you the truth. But I cannot have told it so that you can understand or you must have believed."

"It is clear that it is my intelligence that is at fault," Paul said bitterly and rose up to go.

XI

If truth could be told so that it could be understood it must be believed. Was that what Barnabas had said? Something began to beat against Paul's mind as an imprisoned moth beats against the inside of a tent to get free.

The journey to Jerusalem was rough and hard, but he did not care. He was living in his mind and took small interest in the incidents on the way. They went due south past the Palace of Daphne, where the Greeks worshipped Apollo in the splendid Temple and disgraced themselves by lewd pleasures amongst the cypresses. That was only five miles from Antioch. From there they went on by the sea road through Sidon and Tyre to Ptolomais. The pilgrim ships came in to Ptolomais bringing disease and death and that evil smell with them. But he must have smelt that another time, in the spring. There were no ships in autumn and winter. Cæsarea, Herod's new port,

had quays that were marvels of cut stone masonry. Had he seen them then or on some earlier journey? Paul never remembered. Between Antioch and Jerusalem there were nineteen halts, or was it twenty? It was not five weeks since he had left Tarsus, but it seemed a score of years. Time ceased when your brain seethed with thought.

Before you could state truth you must be sure that you understood it. God alone could reveal that. If He wanted to hide His doings who dare try to unveil them? But when He had revealed it, as in the Law, there must be some way of stating it that was unanswerable. If you stated it to the best of your ability and it failed to convince, was your statement false? No, no! All explanations made by man were inadequate. You had flashes of insight, and then darkness fell and you groped your way again; like a man walking at night on a dark road lit now and then by flares of lightning, or through the streets of a city where here and there a house lamp threw a broad bar of light, and beyond there was blackness.

Several times on the way south they passed traces of ancient High Places, altars of the old savage religions which

the Prophets had fought and destroyed. They had not entirely destroyed them, Paul thought, when he saw outside villages trees hung with rags to propitiate some local deity, or on the hilltops graves with pottery left for the use of the dead. No one could doubt that the Hebrew religion was high above this worship of Moloch and Dagon. But though Paul seized on all these proofs of the special revelation to Jews his old certainty about the Law was dead in him. He tried to revive his enthusiasm by saying over and over again passages of the Scriptures which had once set his soul on fire. He tried to pull up from the depths of his mind the philosophy that had seemed so complete . . . creation, sin and death: Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his only son which had touched the heart of Almighty God: the promises and the gift of the Law: the sacrifices and escape from death. But the chain which had once been convincing now left Paul cold. His longing to serve God, he knew, remained fixed and stubborn. He was as ready to give unquestioning obedience as Abraham had been. But to whom was he to give it? Since he had lost God there was none to command.

There was one night which Paul did not

forget, though he could never recall the place where he was. The caravan had been detained by the business of one of the merchants, and they had had to travel on after sunset. As the light faded Paul, tired with riding, gave his mule into the charge of a camel-driver, and to ease the cramp in his legs walked behind the long string of camels and pack animals. They must have been travelling through moorlands. The sky was wide, and in its vast stretches the stars were dim. Far off, from another caravan either on a cross-road or ahead, the sound of camel bells came through the air. The place must have been near a town or the bells would have been muffled for fear of attracting robbers. Paul's mind soaked in the peace and security of the night and gradually he dropped farther and farther behind the plodding beasts into solitude. God was stern and just but every Jew knew that He cared. Every Jew had been taught that He did not make man for misery. Ask of desire? Desire that leapt beyond reason? You might in your ignorance desire what could never be true but no imagination could conceive what God had to give. If you lived after death everything was possible. Barnabas was

muddle-headed . . . he had said it himself. The righteousness of men might one day bring God to dwell on earth . . . that was the Law . . . but Barnabas seemed to think that their wickedness had brought Messiah. He did not see how dangerously Greek he had become. The Greeks would say that Jesus was one of their gods, gracious and kindly, come to earth on a good errand, who, not knowing the cruelty and stupidity of men had been caught and put to death by their folly. But they would add that as gods and heavenly essences cannot die, he was still alive and able to help his followers.

Suddenly Paul stopped short. The caravan had gone on over the brow of the moor. A camel bell tinkled in the distance and was still. He was alone in an empty world with the folded hills around. Suppose it were true? Suppose there had come a new revelation as high above Judaism as Judaism had been above Moloch and Dagon? Suppose Messiah, no petty Jewish Deliverer but the great Messenger of the Greatest God, had been sent to earth to reveal laws that were to unite the world?

It was a magnificent thought! Barnabas had no idea how magnificent. And it

could be told in such burning words that mankind would have to believe and be saved. . . . But what had happened to him? Paul, terrified, walked on. Under the low sky that brooded over the land and in the darkness incredible things were possible. . . . There was a Presence there.

Everything had become unreal, and Paul felt, as he had often felt before when he had seen or thought much of death, a queer doubling of consciousness that was like a dislocation of the soul. He could see one part of himself walking quickly across the moor while another deeper self grappled with despair, blindly grasping to keep some truth and reality in life. He walked still faster, trying to jerk his mind back into place. How could men be saved without sacrifice? It was a wonderful dream, but it wasn't true! It stultified the past and made mockery of the Law. If he did not kill it now it would destroy him. What terrible thing outside his mind impelled him to think such thoughts?

After that night Paul never ceased to pray. A new thing had come into his life and it must be smashed. Desire had run away from reason. That dream might be magnificent, but it was only imagination.

Before he reached Jerusalem Paul had conquered his imagination, and the sight of the Holy City on the hills with the higher hills behind steadied his mind completely. Jerusalem was so certainly Hebrew. It had triumphed over hundreds of sects. Had Jesus said beware of the leaven of its influence? That only proved he was a blasphemer, for it was an influence which every devout Jew would give his life to maintain. Jehovah had destroyed Jesus. He would make havoc of all blasphemers, of whom Paul felt, even if only for one wild moment, he had been the worst.

XII

Jerusalem looked much as usual, Paul thought, as he rode down the Street of the Small Markets. Traders squatted inside their shops, and people came and went, fingering stuffs or buying goods and shoving them into baskets or inside their girdles, just as if nothing ever happened in life but eating and drinking and settling what you would wear. When he dismounted at Gamaliel's courtyard door, Paul's body was tired with a fatigue that was almost agony, but his mind was at rest. In the last few days he had come to a decision. The accursed thing must be rooted out. It was not true, and an end must be put to it. It was a relief to be in Jerusalem again and able to attack the evil at its headquarters. A settled mind makes for comfort. If he could do nothing else he could at least help other righteous Jews, who no doubt were eager to stop unorthodox and dangerous teaching.

Gamaliel welcomed Paul with all his old affection, and seeing his fatigue sent him to rest at once.

"We can talk later on," he said, and when Paul had recovered they did.

But it was an odd jarring conversation without any harmony. Paul found, to his astonishment, that nothing was being done by the authorities. Gamaliel knew all about the death and rumoured resurrection of Jesus. In answer to Paul's questions he told what he had learnt of the beginnings of the new movement. It had started, he said, with reformations preached by John the Baptizer. John had wanted men to do more than reform. He had urged them to revolutionize their lives. Paul had already heard of him as an ascetic, almost an Essene, who lived in the desert and proclaimed that God was coming, as these teachers all did, and indeed as all devout Jews hoped. Gamaliel told Paul now that John had baptized Jesus, and from that day had insisted that Jesus was greater than he. He had even gone further and proclaimed Jesus as the One who was to come. And now of course these Nazarenes, as they were called, were trying to excite everybody about their new doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. Gamaliel thought

some of them took rather a low and abject view of it.

"I suppose if they saw the spirit of Jesus," he said, "it never struck them that it was his ghost. They had no thought but that they saw his body. They are not very clever."

"Jesus did really die on the cross?" Paul asked, and Gamaliel replied:

"There is no doubt the man was dead. Pilate's soldiers saw to that."

"Somebody must show energy and stamp this teaching out," Paul said, and Gamaliel smiled in that mild way of his, lifting his sensitive eyebrows.

"Can you stamp out a fire in a man's soul? To oppose an emotion sometimes spreads it. Best leave it alone and see how it works. Jewish opinion is mixed on this question, and in Jerusalem we have always debated and talked as we like."

"But we ought to be clear-sighted enough to see where this thing leads," Paul insisted, and Gamaliel said:

"How can we know what is in the mind of God? In dealing with such things we must walk with care and sobriety. You want to be too sure of everything, Paul, and I am always against the certain."

"Do you believe in this resurrection yourself?" Paul asked bluntly.

"I see no reason why it should not be true," Gamaliel replied.

"And if it is a lie?" Paul persisted.

"It will die of itself," Gamaliel said mildly, and Paul answered hotly:

"But lies have legs. The story has spread all over Cilicia. The authorities must act firmly."

"Take care, Paul. You may lead other people into sin. Don't do it," Gamaliel said.

"Don't do what?" Paul asked, astonished.

"Don't stir people up. You may let loose great cruelty. Persecution for opinion is not in our traditions. I was appalled at the savagery with which Jesus was killed. When the Nazarenes say that he died to save us from sin I wonder if they mean our cruelty and insensibility to pain! We certainly need salvation from that!"

"What fools they are! How could his death save us?" Paul said crossly.

"They talk of a sacrifice of some kind. I haven't gone into it," Gamaliel replied.

Gamaliel was getting old and flabby, Paul thought. That damnable gift of

taking life easily would weaken any resolution. You had to be on the watch all the time against it. Paul felt his own mind stiffening, but he wanted to be hard. Idealism which would not face facts always roused his resistance. You must face facts. Did he do it himself? He hastily turned his thoughts away.

"I want to hear what these Nazarenes have to say," he said.

"You must go to the Synagogue of the Freedmen," Gamaliel replied. "They tell me there are disputes going on there all the time."

"The revelation was not complete, then?" Paul asked ironically, and Gamaliel smiled.

"They are led by a young man called Stephen," he said. "I hear he is energetic and clever and has great influence there."

So a few days later Paul went to the synagogue. He knew it well. It had been founded by those Jews (or their descendants) whom Pompey had taken captive after his conquest of Jerusalem. When they were given their freedom and allowed to return to Jerusalem they had built this synagogue, where the Hellenistic Jews of Italy and North Africa, Alexandria and Asia Minor, could hear the Law read and

expounded in Greek. Few of them spoke Aramaic, and to Paul's mind too much loose discussion went on in the synagogue. It was a large building with bedrooms and baths where Greek-speaking Jews could put up when they came to Jerusalem for the feasts.

On the way there Paul met a Hebrew Jew, a middle-aged Sadducee, one of the party in power, orthodox but not very pious, whom he had known before. He was going to the synagogue too, out of curiosity, so they walked together.

"These Nazarenes have been fighting amongst themselves about some matter of almsgiving," he told Paul. "You know they have pooled all their goods, and of course everybody began to squabble at once. Now they have appointed deacons to settle the fights, and leave the older men free to discuss the teaching of their prophet."

"I wonder you allow them so much freedom," Paul said angrily.

The Sadducee looked surprised at his heat.

"What could we do to them?" he asked. "They are not separated. They attend the festivals and worship in the Temple. I have only heard them spoken of as a new and peculiar sect who say their prophet

has been seen after death. Is there anything else against them?"

"They say that Jesus was Messiah, and quote the Law to prove it," Paul said shortly. Sadducees annoyed him with their superior indifference to other men's desire for life after death.

"People quote the Law about everything! Now that we have got rid of Jesus in the body we are not afraid of the influence of his spirit," the Sadducee said, and when Paul rejoined hotly:

"That is exactly what you ought to be afraid of," he did not agree. He smiled at such heat, but explained at some length:

"We must have no rows in Jerusalem now. The Emperor still wants Pilate to introduce his image into the Temple for open worship. Pilate knows that our people will rebel if he does, and that he will lose his job. If we have a private row about religion he will take advantage of it and obey the Emperor openly. Pilate would like to make us worship Tiberias, and he would like to see inside the Holiest Place. It annoys these Romans to think we have a symbol high above all their Mysteries, and they are all curious. When Pompey violated the Temple he saw all he wanted, and no vengeance fell on him from Jehovah,

so what is there but policy to prevent Pilate from doing the same thing?"

"The Great Council could surely do something quietly," Paul suggested. His companion was a Member of the Sanhedrin.

"We are like men on a see-saw," the other replied. "We never know when our power will be taken from us. I hear that some of the younger priests are joining the Nazarenes. They disapprove of the tithes passing through the hands of the High Priest."

"That is an innovation, and an unjust one too," Paul said, and the Sadducee shrugged his shoulders.

"What can we do? We must have money to keep up the Temple. If we dropped that we should lose all prestige and be completely swallowed by the Romans. But this Nazarene business is of no importance. It will soon die away."

He was quite sure of that. But when he joined Paul again after the discussion in the synagogue was over, his indifferent superiority had gone, and he was so full of indignation that Paul had no need to encourage his wrath.

Stephen had spoken. He was one of the seven deacons appointed to administer the property of the Nazarenes, but he was

evidently more than a mere man of business. At first it seemed to Paul that he was held in great honour. Men listened intently, but as the discussion went on they seemed to admire his judgment less, and in the end the meeting broke up in disorder. Paul took no part in the debate. He saw that Stephen, young and dogmatic, was putting himself more and more in the wrong, and he wanted to know the worst of the teaching.

When Stephen said that only repentance and faith were necessary for salvation, many of the older Hellenists, who had given up their homes abroad and returned to Jerusalem to fulfil the Law and so gain eternal life, became angry. Paul heard one man say :

" I gave up a good business, and I live now in comparative poverty. If the Temple sacrifices are useless why need I have returned ? "

Perhaps Stephen went further than he had intended, for the murmurs that began to run round the room seemed to excite him, and a little knot of his fellow Nazarenes approved everything he said. He ended by crying out :

" All this mass of observance is intolerable ! What has it to do with religion ?

Nothing! The Temple regulations ought to be abolished. What have they to do with God? How can such savagery bring us nearer to our Father?"

Paul in the front row leant forward listening eagerly. Did the man not understand the danger he ran? Stephen was preaching anarchy! No Law. No Temple. He must be mad. They were all mad.

Stephen finished more calmly. God, he said, could be found in any part of the earth if men sought Him earnestly enough. His Presence was not confined to buildings made by men. He was greater than any temple. The teaching of Jesus had superseded the Law. What need was there now for this tremendous organisation of sacrifice and worship?

It was at this that the meeting broke up in indignation and Stephen was drawn away by his friends. The Sadducee was horrified, and expressed himself freely to Paul as they walked away.

"He would make the Law only a temporary set of rules with no more sanctity than pagan regulations. His Messiah is a sort of petty god. We must support the Temple. It is our only means of securing Divine favour, and our existence as a nation now depends on that!"

Paul saw that the man had no real religion in him and doubted if he believed in the God whose favour he wanted. The Sadducees traded on the superstitions of the people which kept them in power. In his heart Paul could not think that God's help would only be given in return for sacrifices or worship, or the grandeur of His Temple, but he said nothing of this. He did not want to debate. His mind, which had beat to and fro for so long, had come to a rest. Stephen's teaching would sweep too much away. The Law must be maintained even at the price of death.

The Sadducee declared that he would see other Members of the Great Council and tell them what was going on, and he urged Paul to talk to his friends too, and stir them up.

" How can you Pharisees stand teaching which says that the Law is only a set of human rules soon to be swept away? " he asked.

Paul did not need and rather resented this urging from a man who a few moments before had been certain that nothing was wrong, but he agreed to do what he could, and they parted.

But when Paul began to try to stir people up he did not find it so easy. The

poor were ready enough to get excited, but the rich had too much to lose. Open energetic action against the Nazarenes meant a risk which few would take. Paul was not old enough to be a Member of the Great Council himself, and as he went to and fro explaining how dangerous the new sect was, and urging men to do something definite against it, he raged in his own mind at his powerlessness. He longed to be able to use his eloquence and influence directly at the Sanhedrin. It was maddening to act through other people.

He found that most men thought that any help from Pilate was out of the question. Pilate, he gathered, had resented being made a catspaw by Caiphas and manœuvred into commanding the crucifixion of Jesus. Now, with more knowledge of the people he ruled he was less likely to compose their private quarrels, and indeed would welcome them. But in any case Pilate was not in Jerusalem. He was in Samaria, subduing the so-called rebellion there, and subduing it with a ferocity, men said, that argued badly for any future co-operation with the Jews. He seemed to have grown to hate their religion and customs. The festival of the Dedication of the Temple was at hand, and Paul heard much gossip as to

the intentions of the Captain of the Guard, who held the sacred robes of the High Priest. Would he deliver them in time for their purification before the feast began? What would happen if he refused?

The Captain of the Guard delivered up the robes with the usual ceremony, and after that Jerusalem was lost in the preparations for the feast. And it was only when it was all over, when the illuminations in the Temple and in the houses of the people were burnt out, and the ivy and green boughs carried in the processions withered, that Gamaliel told Paul that the Great Council had decided to order Stephen before it and examine him as to his orthodoxy. Gamaliel was not pleased with Paul. He was as severe as his gentle nature could be, and Paul saw that he suspected him of wanting a persecution. On the morning when the examination of Stephen was to take place the old man went out early alone, and either by oversight or intention did not tell Paul where the Council was to meet. Paul concluded that as the matter was of importance the meeting-place would be at the house of the High Priest and went straight there. But on his arrival he found the courtyard deserted, and one of the servants told him

that the Sanhedrin was sitting in its new rooms in the precincts of the Temple. Paul had never been to this meeting-place. The last time he had watched the proceedings of the Council it had met in the old Stone Chamber where the Romans now kept the robes of the High Priest under the safe custody of the Captain of the Guard. Paul ran in haste to the Temple, but he did not know where to go, and when at last he was directed aright he was too late to secure a place. The hall was full and the people overflowed into the courtyard.

He heard abuse of the Nazarenes and gossip bandied about on every side by the crowd, and after listening for a time he could not stand it any longer. This ignorance and hatred disgusted him. The examination of Stephen was not a matter of personal dislike but of the public defence of Judaism.

He walked away and went through the Court of the Gentiles into the Inner Court of the Temple. Here he tried to pray. But he could not concentrate his thoughts. God was too far away. That crowd had a nasty tone. He gave up the attempt to pray and sat down on one of the benches of the Colonnade close to the colossal laver of brass supported by twelve lions which

always stood ready full of water near the Altar. The priests dipped their bloody hands in it. Paul could not see the water, but no doubt it was still coloured with the blood of the morning sacrifices. He did not know how often the attendant priests changed it.

He did not sit there long. The smell of smouldering flesh that always hung round the Colonnade sickened him, and he hated the splashes of blood on the heap of salt. That smell, like the scent of the harlot, sickened soul as well as body. How could Almighty God be pleased with such sacrifice? Moloch or Dagon might be. Would the sacrifice of Stephen please Him either?

Startled, Paul got up and left the Court. This time he went to the north-east of the Temple, where against the great wall that rose from the valley of Jehoshaphat there were sheds and courtyards in which the priests stacked wood for the Altar and housed the sheep that were driven in through the postern gate for the sacrifices. The sheep were washed in the pool just outside and came in with their fleeces as white as snow.

Paul walked across the court towards the sheep-gate. The place was empty except

for a small boy who was pacing up and down the pavement near the wall, his eyes glued to the stone flags. Every now and then he stopped and stamped hard with one foot, leaning down to listen.

Paul's curiosity was roused, and he stood still to watch. At first the boy was too much absorbed in his occupation to pay any attention to a stranger, and Paul watched him, half frowning. What was he doing? He was about ten years old. Paul liked the look of him.

"Have you lost something?" he asked suddenly.

The small boy started and looked up, surprised. He had clear, almost green eyes, and his turban hid the colour of his hair. He stamped hard on the last flag close to the sheep-gate before he answered, and then with his turban knocked over one eye by his exertions he came up to Paul.

"No," he said, "I've lost nothing. I'm looking for something."

In spite of his preoccupation Paul was intrigued by the child's solemnity.

"What are you looking for?" he asked.

The boy carefully examined Paul, and evidently satisfied that he could be trusted said confidentially:

"It's the crypt where Solomon tor-

tured the devils. If the pavement sounds hollow it may be underneath."

"I never heard of such a place! Why do you want it?" Paul answered.

The child looked round cautiously to see if they were alone. Then he said:

"Treasure! When he tortured them they would give him treasure. My father would look for it then. He takes care of the Temple."

"Is your father a priest?" Paul asked, and the boy nodded. He thrust a hand into Paul's, and skipping a little walked a few paces with him towards the sheep-gate. Then he stopped and said excitedly, still holding Paul by the hand:

"You know they have found treasure on the Holy Mountain? Not our Holy Mountain, but the one belonging to those others. A man dreamt where the Ark and the Holy Vessels are buried, and thousands of people have gone to see. Pilate has gone too. He wants to find it first. My father says we can do what we like now, so I came out here to look. Thousands will be killed. My father says these things always end in death for somebody! But not here. He meant in Samaria."

He seemed quite pleased at the idea! Ought he to be rebuked? Paul hesitated.

No. He had been snubbed too much in his own childhood. He would never put into another child's heart the fear that had been put into his. What could a child know of death? But he need not talk of the trouble in Samaria. Solomon and his devils were safer.

"Why not try outside the walls?" he suggested. "It is not likely that even Solomon would torture devils inside the Temple."

The small boy shrank back.

"Oh no. I won't go there," he said. He was evidently frightened. He pulled himself together and came closer.

"It's a horrible place outside there," he told Paul. "All the feet and hands that Pilate cuts off criminals are thrown down there. It opens into hell. You can hear the cries at night. I went once to listen, but I was afraid to stay after dark. I heard nothing."

"I didn't remember what it was like. I thought there was nothing but the pool where the sheep are washed," Paul replied.

"They wash them with sheep wort. I'm not afraid of that part. It's the place where they used to kill people. There's a big heap of stones. Pilate won't let anybody be stoned now. He likes to crucify

them." The small boy suddenly caught Paul's hand and kissed it in ceremonious farewell. "I've got to try over there." He pointed to the south-east of the Temple enclosure, where the priests' houses were. "I may come back again." He dropped Paul's hand and ran off, and Paul looked after him until he was out of sight. How odd children were.

What would they do to Stephen? Pilate was away. What had that small boy said, "We can do what we like now"? Paul walked on out of the postern gate. He found himself on the flat ground of the small natural platform that hung above the valley of Jehoshaphat. To his left was the shallow pool cut in the rock in which the sheep were dipped, and a little beyond were the porticoes of the bath pools. Still further on was the road to Damascus. Paul turned to his right and walked as far as he safely could to the edge of the precipice. Here the ground pushed forward a little into the valley, and without straining his neck he could see the great wall of the Temple that rose sheer from its foundations in the ravine two hundred feet below. Its immense stone blocks were laid without cement or mortar. In the middle of its length a little gate opened out of the

Temple Courts on to the steep flight of steps that were cut in the rock right down to the bottom where the brook Kereth ran. You went that way to the Mount of Olives and on to the wilderness. Looking down across the tops of the olive trees Paul could see the thin thread of the river. He knew it ran full to the brim for there had been much rain lately. The trees too, so far below, were dwarfed into bushes. All the impurities of the Temple ran down there. As that child had said, hands and feet cut from criminals were thrown into the ravine. What a hideous and sordid world it was!

Somewhere inside the Temple the Levites began to sing. They were practising the Psalms. Paul stood still to listen. Were they singing the Song of the Pilgrims? The great choir of five hundred voices swelled and filled the air, then faltered and died away. The leader had evidently stopped it. The voices began again. They rose and fell like the wind across a forest. Sometimes they repeated a phrase. Paul walked back across the little peninsula and sat down facing the Mount of Olives on a big heap of stones piled against the wall. They were rather like the stones that the Romans used in their catapults. No. Of

course the small boy had said they were for stoning. . . . There was no stoning now.

The Levites were practising the last verse of the song which the pilgrims sing as they draw nearer the Holy City but are as yet outside the walls :

" Let my soul live and it shall praise Thee :
O let Thy judgement help me :
I have gone astray like a sheep that is lost :
O seek Thy servant :
For I do not forget Thy commandments."

The voices were silent for a moment. Then they burst out again :

" I have gone astray like a sheep that is lost."

They sang the phrase again and again. They ought to be perfect soon. What a moving sound a choir of hundreds of men's voices was !

A few white clouds floated over the Mount of Olives. It was out that way that the scapegoat was driven into the wilderness. What happened to him then ? Did he die or find food enough to live on ? No man knew. The High Priest put his hands on the head of the victim and drove him forth with the sins of the people on his head. And God's justice was satisfied. The people were free. . . . The scapegoat was a Jewish idea.

The Levites had changed their Psalm. They were now singing one of the prayers of the sin-stricken.

> " Create in me a clean heart, O God :
> And renew a right spirit within me.
> Cast me not away from Thy presence :
> O take not Thy Holy Spirit from me."

Paul's eyes were fixed on the path leading to the Mount of Olives. It was out that way, men said, that the officers of the Temple had climbed to arrest Jesus. He, too, like the scapegoat, could have escaped to the wilderness if he had not forbidden his followers to use violence. Why had he thought he had to die?

> " O give me the comfort of Thy help again :
> Establish me with Thy free spirit.
> Then will I teach Thy ways to the wicked :
> And sinners shall be converted to Thee,"

the choir sang.

Gideon had said that Jesus had prayed these songs on the cross. He must have loved them. He had come to teach men how to live. Barnabas had said that. But the Law had always taught brotherly love. The songs were floating Paul into another world.

> " Thou desirest not sacrifice :
> Else would I give it.
> Thou delightest not in burnt offerings.

The sacrifice of God is a broken spirit :
A broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise."

" The sacrifice of God is a broken spirit :
A broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise,"

the Levites repeated.

The song ceased abruptly and there was silence. What deep and dark things there were in human nature! Paul suddenly covered his face with his hands. What had he been doing? What had he been doing? Stirring men up to hatred, not teaching them to love. He had sinned against God. . . . Surely they would only reprimand Stephen and let him go? There was no stoning now. Paul jumped to his feet. He must wash his hands of this thing at once and go on to Arabia, where he could be alone. He must be alone.

The Levites began again. They had evidently been turning back their rolls of the Law, for it was the second Psalm. The Sanhedrin would still be examining Stephen. It sometimes sat for hours. . . . Gamaliel would throw all his weight on the side of mercy. Paul sat down again. He would listen to this one, and then he would go. The Levites evidently knew this Psalm well. The leader did not stop them.

They sang straight on, one choir stating and the other responding.

" Why do the nations so furiously rage :
And peoples imagine vain things ?
Kings of the earth stand up :
Rulers take counsel together.
Against the Lord and against His Anointed.
They say ' Let us break these bonds asunder :
Let us cast away these cords.'
He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh :
The Lord shall have them in derision."

Paul listened intently. He knew every word.

" I will tell of the Decree :
That the Lord hath said unto me,
Thou art my Son :
This day have I begotten thee.
Ask of me :
I will give thee the nations for thine inheritance
And the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession."

Something odd and subtle was happening in Paul's mind, just as it had happened that night when he had walked alone across the moor. The Levites had sung it. They were singing it now. . . . God had once cared enough for His people to put His bow in the clouds to show them that He would keep faith. Had He now sent a great Spirit, one near and dear to Him, to remind men that He still kept faith . . . that He would never again destroy His people, but would

save them from their sins? Suppose it were true?

" Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and ye perish from the way :
If his wrath be kindled (yea, but a little) :
Blessed are all they that put their trust in him ! "

Distracted, Paul rose to his feet. Was the Law only the beginning of the knowledge of God? Jesus . . . the scapegoat . . . a Messenger and a Sacrifice too? What was he thinking? He must get out of Jerusalem. He must go where he could be alone and think. But first he must atone. If anything happened to Stephen the sin would be on his head.

There was a noise of shouting and uproar behind. Paul turned quickly.

People were running to see what it was. Men on the Damascus road had stopped to listen. Camel-drivers stayed their beasts. The bathers in the pools rushed half-naked from the porticos. A mob of people had swarmed out of the Damascus Gate. Yelling and screaming they poured into the road, dragging someone with them. Paul ran too. He heard a voice high above the clamour cry :

" This way. Bring him along this way." The mob curved like one man round to the right towards the precipice.

" What is it? " Paul called to the nearest man.

" Blasphemy," the man called back, and the crowd swept past Paul with Stephen in the midst.

At the sight of all those faces black with rage and fear, Paul's heart stood still. Had the Great Council condemned Stephen? Surely not. . . .? But Pilate was away.

The mob reached the peninsula and pulled up at the edge of the ravine. Two men had Stephen by the arms, and there was a brief discussion. Paul pushed forward.

" What are they going to do? " he asked.

" Stone him," half a dozen voices answered.

" Has he been condemned? " Paul demanded.

" How do we know? He has blasphemed," was the reply. Paul struggled to get to the front, but several men were now making a circle, pushing the crowd back, and he was pushed back with the others. They were squeezed back and back until Paul's feet touched the pile of stones, and then further still, so that he had to climb the heap and at last he stood with his back to the wall of the Temple, helpless.

In the cleared circle two men were stripping Stephen. Paul, high above the crowd, could see and hear clearly. But jammed back there he could do nothing. . . . The men acted with authority. The Council must have condemned Stephen. . . . They would never carry out an illegal act so legally. . . . Stoning was more merciful than crucifixion. Jesus had hung for hours on the cross. . . . Things so beastly ought not to be allowed.

The Levites, ignorant of the horrors going on outside, sang a few lines, Paul never knew what. Then a boy's voice began. It soared and soared like the voice of an angel.

" Have mercy on me, O God:
According to Thy loving kindness.
According to the multitude of Thy tender mercies:
Blot out my transgression."

The voice stopped. The mob, breathless with excitement, was still too.

Stephen was now naked save for his loin-cloth. His body was a pale golden colour. It was young and slim, like the naked figure of Hermes in the market-place at home. He turned and put a hand on the arm of one of his guards.

" You give me leave to pray? " he asked and smiled.

The man, as if stung by a serpent, shook off the hand, but he stepped back a pace, and Paul squeezed against the wall with his back to the Mount of Olives, saw Stephen's face as he turned to the east, lit up, as if a light shone behind his eyes. Was he rapt away from earth already, seeing unutterable things? Stoning was more merciful than crucifixion. . . . Paul felt he was going to be sick.

Stephen had finished his prayer. One of the witnesses was nervous.

"Do you shove first, or is it both together?" Paul heard him ask. The other, a more brutal man, did not wait for the help of his companion. He took hold of Stephen by the shoulder and roughly pushed him forward.

"You want me to go to the edge? I will walk as far as I may," Stephen said, and moved a few steps. The nervous witness came behind him. One at each side, the two men caught Stephen by the shoulders, ran him across the platform and with a shove pushed him over the precipice. The naked body spread-eagled in the air and fell out of sight. There was a dead silence and then a faint thud.

After a moment's pause the witnesses went forward and leant cautiously over

the edge of the ravine. Other men in the crowd went too. They peered into the abyss.

"Does he move? Shall we need the stones?" Paul heard the nervous witness ask the other.

"He's nothing but a red splosh!" one of the men called back from the precipice. "Every bone in his body must be broken."

"Best make sure!" the second witness said, and came over to the heap of stones.

In the Temple the Levites were still practising. "Behold!" they sang. The sound crashed out and stopped harshly. The voices seemed to break into fragments.

The witnesses pushed a boulder from the bottom of the pile and all the stones on the heap moved down. Paul moved with them and stepped on to the ground.

"Behold!" the Levites began again, and a second time the volume of sound broke up abruptly. Silence. The leader must be pulling them together.

The witnesses, helped by some of the other men, were rolling the big boulder to the edge of the precipice.

"Behold!"

This time the choir had got it right! Triumphantly, like one man, in a great

shout of music, the Levites broke into the Song of Unity.

> "Behold! How good and pleasant a thing it is:
> Brethren: To dwell together in unity."

Paul turned with a cry of despair and ran from the place.

And the next day he set out for Damascus.